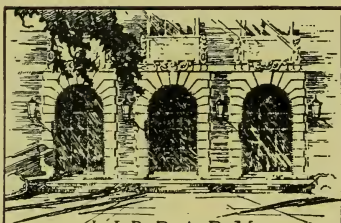


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King of the Castle.

A NOVEL

BY

G. MANVILLE FENN,

AUTHOR OF

'THIS MAN'S WIFE;' 'THE MASTER OF THE CEREMONIES;'

'DOUBLE CUNNING,' ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.		PAGE
AN ANGRY ENCOUNTER,		1
CHAPTER II.		
AT THE GRAVE,		15
CHAPTER III.		
GLYDDYR REQUIRES A PICK-ME-UP,		21
CHAPTER IV.		
WIMBLE SEIZES THE CLUE,		49
CHAPTER V.		
MR WIMBLE IS IN DOUBT,		61
CHAPTER VI.		
TWO MEETINGS,		73
CHAPTER VII.		
GLYDDYR ENDORSES A NOTE,		84
CHAPTER VIII.		
MRS SARSON'S APPEAL,		95
CHAPTER IX.		
A DEBATE,		117

CHAPTER X.		PAGE
COMING BACK ON FRIDAY,		130
CHAPTER XI.		
UNDER THE CLOUD,		145
CHAPTER XII.		
CONSCIENCE PRICKING,		158
CHAPTER XIII.		
A STRANGE WOOING,		167
CHAPTER XIV.		
AND THIS IS BEING MARRIED,		182
CHAPTER XV.		
"ONLY WAIT,"		195
CHAPTER XVI.		
HOW JOHN TREVITHICK SPOKE OUT,		213
CHAPTER XVII.		
A CLIMAX IN GLYDDYR'S LIFE,		222
CHAPTER XVIII.		
THE LAWYER IS BUSY,		234
CHAPTER XIX.		
TWO WIVES,		251
CHAPTER XX.		
THE TRUTH,		260

KING OF THE CASTLE



KING OF THE CASTLE.

CHAPTER I.

AN ANGRY ENCOUNTER.

NIGHT, and the tramping of many feet on the granite-paved path and terrace.

The wind from off the sea rushing and sighing round the house, making, as the great hall door was opened, the lightly-hung pictures on the walls swing gently to and fro, as if ghostly hands touched them from time to time.

Claude and Mary were waiting, dressed, in the drawing-room, ready to go to the inquest, and the latter held her cousin's hand tightly as they listened, and in imagination painted, by the help of the sounds, all that was going on.

There were whispers in men's voices, muffled footsteps on the thick rugs in the paved hall, with the sharp sound from time to time as a foot fell on the bare granite.

Then came the opening of the study door, and a piteous sigh escaped from Claude's breast as in imagination she saw the darkened room into which the jurymen passed one by one, to stay a few moments, and then pass out.

Then more whispers, more trampling, muffled and loud; the closing of the study door; and then the sighing and moaning of the wind ceased suddenly, as the great hall door was shut; voices came more loudly as steps passed along the terrace, and grew fainter and fainter as they filed out, and once more the house was still.

Down by the inn, affected most by the fishermen from its proximity to the harbour, the principal part of the inhabitants of the place were gathered, waiting in knots and discussing Gartram's death, till such time as the jury returned. Then a lane was opened for them to pass through into the great room of the inn, the fishermen crowding in after-

wards, while two men drawn, one by summons, the other for reasons of his own, to the inquest, found themselves, by the irony of fate, side by side, and compelled to walk in this way down the long passage packed in by the crowd, and upstairs to the room where the inquest was to be held.

Parry Glyddyr had grown more calm and firm as the day had worn on, while Chris had, on the other hand, become more excited; and, finding himself thus thrown close beside his rival, he could not help turning a sharp inquiring look upon him, as if asking what he had to say.

But no word was spoken, and, forced on by the crowd behind, they at last found themselves close up to the head of the table, listening to the coroner's words as the various witnesses were examined, a low murmur arising when Claude's name was called, and a way clear made for her to pass through, and give the little evidence she could as to her father's habits, and then she was led, silently weeping, away.

Sarah Woodham—cold, dark and stern now

— was called to speak of her duty in taking to her master his tonic draught, and she could tell of his habit in using a narcotic to produce sleep.

- Other witnesses were examined, including both the doctors. Asher gravely and deprecatingly stating how he had prescribed for his patient. The new doctor gave his opinion upon what he had seen; the coroner summed up; and the jury, sworn to do their duty in the inquiry, had no difficulty in unanimously agreeing that it was a case of accidental death, and gradually melting away with the crowd. Glyddyr, one of the last to leave the room, breathing more freely since he had given his evidence relative to seeing Gartram lying asleep, but feeling that he was ghastly pale, and afraid to meet Chris Lisle's eye, as he passed out of the inquiry room, and out on to the cliff to let the soft, cool night air fan his cheeks.

His knees seemed to give way beneath him, and he was glad to move a little to one side, and rest against the iron rail that guarded the ledge of the cliff, for he was giddy with emotion

as he felt how narrow an escape he had had from destruction.

“But they could not tell,” he said to himself. “It was his heart; and no doctor could have analysed the case sufficiently to have said who gave him a larger quantity than he usually took.

“Yes, safe,” he muttered, with a feeling of relief and elation. But the giddy sensation returned, and he could gladly have gone into the inn and call for brandy, had he dared, the thought that such an action on his part might cause suspicion keeping him back.

He could hear the people, grouped about, discussing the event, and though it horrified him, and moment by moment as he stood leaning over the rail and gazing out to sea, he anticipated hearing something said which would fix suspicion upon him, he could not tear himself away.

His men were waiting for him at the harbour steps, but he shrank from moving, though he suffered agony in staying there, for out before him, on the dark sea with the stars reflected, and looking up at him like eyes, he felt that

there was danger, and that he would not dare to go out to his yacht.

And yet he kept asking himself what there was to fear.

“Dead men tell no tales,” he kept saying to himself; but nothing seemed to check his nervous dread.

“Suppose all should be discovered?”

At last he tore himself away, determined to get on board the yacht, have a good stiff glass of brandy and water, and go to bed early; but, instead of turning off to the left and down to the end of the pier, he found himself led as it were up the cliff-path towards the Fort; and with the full intention of going right to the door to inquire how the ladies were, so as to force down and master the cowardly dread, he passed on, and when close to the drawbridge, stopped short.

A firm, elastic step was coming in the other direction, and a new dread assailed him.

Thought flies quickly, and in a few moments he had analysed his position.

He had, in his endeavour to obtain money, destroyed Gartram's life. He had tried to

make himself believe that he was only going to borrow part of what would be his anon ; but, in his hurry and fear, he had failed to obtain the money, and he had removed Gartram.

What would be the result ? Claude would doubtless have become his wife when urged by her father, but that father was dead, and he was face to face with the fact that he had destroyed his chances. For Claude had evidently a strong leaning towards Chris Lisle ; and while he had been shiveringly and nervously leaning against the cliff rail, Chris had quickly made his way to the ladies' side, had walked home with them, and now was returning master of the situation, and in another few moments would be standing face to face with him.

A fierce feeling of resentment sprang up in his breast. and, as his hands clenched, he could feel the veins in his forehead tingle and start.

Chris was coming slowly down the path, with his head bent, thinking deeply of Claude's sorrow, and in spite of the angry words which had passed during their last interview, full of

sorrow for the hard, passionate man cut off so suddenly ; but as he suddenly found himself confronted by Glyddyr, he felt the blood flush up into his temples, and his hands shook,

It was momentary. His hands dropped easily to his sides, and he told himself that he need not fear Glyddyr now. He had only to wait patiently till the time of mourning and sorrow had passed away, and then Claude would naturally turn to him ; and for the first time he felt glad that he had made that *coup*.

"I am not going to make an enemy of this man," he said to himself. "I can afford to be generous ;" and, breaking the silence, he said quietly, "Going up to the house, Mr Glyddyr?"

"Sir?"

"I said, are you going up to the house?"

"The man's angry and disappointed," thought Chris, and he spoke in the same quiet, inquiring tone.

"And, pray, by what right do you question me?" said Glyddyr angrily, and glad of something which roused him from the trembling, morbid state in which he was grovelling.

"I can hardly call it a right," replied Chris,

“and only speak as a very old friend of the family.”

“Friend? Why, confound you, sir; Mr Gartram ordered you never to enter his house again.”

“Let Mr Gartram rest,” replied Chris, gravely, and his tones were so impressive and seemed so full of suggestion that Glyddyr shrank again, and was silent. “I only wished to say that Miss Gartram is ill—utterly prostrate—and that an intrusion—”

“Intrusion!” cried Glyddyr, recovering himself, and beginning to quiver with jealous rage.

“Yes, sir; intrusion upon Miss Gartram at such a time would be as cruel as uncalled for.”

“Intrusion! Such insolence! Are you aware, sir—”

“I am aware of everything, sir, everything,” said Chris firmly; and once more Glyddyr, ridden by coward conscience, shivered, that word “everything” conveyed so much. “This is neither time nor place to discuss such matters. That poor gentleman is lying dead yonder; his child is broken-hearted, and I ask

you, as a gentleman, to refrain from going up there now."

There was silence for a few moments, during which Glyddyr battled hard with his feelings, and Chris felt that, had it been any one else, he would not have spoken in this way.

"And suppose, sir, I refuse?" cried Glyddyr at last.

There was another pause, for the smouldering hatred against this man deep down in Chris Lisle's breast began to glow, and there was a curious twitching about his fingers; but the thoughts of what had taken place, and Claude's pale, sorrowful countenance, rose before him, and he said quietly,—

"You cannot refuse, sir."

"But I do," raged Gladdy. "Do you hear? I do refuse, and tell you it is a piece of insolent assumption on your part to dictate to me what I shall do."

Chris was silent, and Glyddyr misinterpreted that silence in his excitement, or he would not have gone on with a passionate rage that was almost childish.

"Confound you for daring to come here at

all. What do you mean, fellow? And now, understand this: if you intrude your presence upon that lady or her cousin again, I'll have you horse-whipped and turned off the place. Do you hear me—go!"

"Parry Glyddyr," said Chris gently, "at a time like this, every instinct within me prompts me to try and behave like a gentleman—"

"You—a gentleman!" sneered Glyddyr.

"To one who was that poor man's friend, and whom I should fain have believed—"

"Curse your insolence!" sneered Glyddyr. "Leave this place. Go back to your kennel, dog. Don't preach to me."

"You have totally forgotten yourself, sir, and I can only attribute it to your having been drinking. I will not quarrel with you now. I once more appeal to you to go."

"And I once more order you to go!" cried Glyddyr, whose mad rage for the moment rode over his natural cowardice. "What! You will not go? It is an insult to every one here. Be off!"

"Have you forgotten trying to turn me away from here once before?"

“When you took a cowardly advantage of me, sir. I have not forgotten it, but—bah! I have no time to quarrel with such a cad. Be off, and if you come here again, take the consequences.”

He turned on his heel to go up to the house.

“Stop,” said Chris, in a low deep trembling voice. “Mr Glyddyr, I appeal to you once more. Don’t go up there to that place now,” and he laid his hand upon his shoulder.

Glyddyr turned upon him, and made a back-handed blow at his face.

The flame flashed out for an instant, and then it was smothered down.

Quick as lightning Chris Lisle’s firm, strong hand gripped his rival by the wrist; there was a savage wrench given to the arm, and, after a miserable attempt at resistance, Glyddyr leant over to ease the agony he felt.

“If I did what nature seems to prompt me to do,” whispered Chris, “I should throw you into that moat; but, I will try and keep my temper. You are half-drunk. You are not fit to go up to that house. I am not afraid of your going there, but I will not have her insulted

by your presence to-night. Come down here."

His grip was like that of some machine as he gave Glyddyr's arm another wrench, and then marched him right away down the path to the harbour, and then along the pier to the end.

Before they reached this point, Glyddyr had made another feeble attempt to free himself, and there was a momentary struggle, which brought both to the edge of the south pier, where there was a fall into deep water.

"Come quietly, or, by all that's holy, I'll throw you in," said Chris hoarsely; and Glyddyr ceased struggling, and suffered himself to be led to the end, where the crew of the yacht's gig were waiting, smoking, till their master came.

"Now," whispered Chris, "go and sleep off your drunken fit. Another time, when you can act and think like a man, we may both have something more to say."

He loosened his grip of Glyddyr's arm.

"Here, my lads," he said, "get your master aboard; he is not fit to be alone."

"Drunk or mad," said Chris to himself, as he strode quickly along the pier to get back to his own room, and try to grow calm.

"I suppose a man must feel like I did to-night," he thought, after a time, "when the devil comes into him, and he kills his enemy. If he had known what was in me then, he wouldn't have dared to say all that. But I'm better now."

CHAPTER II.

AT THE GRAVE.

ALL Danmouth gathered to see the funeral procession wind down the granite-paved path to the cliff, and then along by the harbour to the little church on the rock shelf at the entrance of the glen.

Gartram had been hated, but death had destroyed all petty dislikes, and the people only remembered now the many acts of charity he had performed.

It was unwittingly, and by proxy, for he never knew one half of the kindly actions done in his name, and as the procession wound through the place, there was many a wet eye among the lookers-on, and the saying that ran among the simple folks, quarrymen's and fisher's wives, was: "A hard man;" and then, "but oh, so generous and good."

It was against the etiquette of the sad cere-

mony, but Claude had said that she should follow her father to the grave, and the cousins walked behind the plain massive coffin, swung at arm's-length by the handles, and carried by three relays of Gartram's stout quarrymen, all ready to say : " Yes, a good master after all."

Every blind was down, every one was in the street or along the cliff, for " The King of the Castle " was dead, and, for the most part, Danmouth seemed to have been made by him. So its people felt real sorrow for themselves as they said : " What is to be done now ? "

On and on, with the slow tolling of the bell echoing right up the glen, and startling the white-breasted gulls which floated here and there, uttering their querulous cries as the procession wound its slow way on to the granite-built lych gate—Gartram's gift ; and as they passed on to the church, Claude was conscious more than ever that Chris Lisle was standing bareheaded by the church door till they passed, and then, through her tear-blinded eyes, she saw that Glyddyr was within, pale and ashen, as he rested one hand upon a pew door.

Then out to the wind-swept churchyard, and there, after a few minutes, it seemed to Claude that she was standing alone, to place a few flowers which she carried upon the hollow-sounding oaken case.

“Come,” whispered a voice at her side, and she took the hand held out to her by her cousin, and was led away, feeling that she was alone now in the world. Wealth, position, such as few women at her age could claim, all seemed as nothing. She was alone.

As the mourners went sadly away, Chris Lisle walked slowly up to the entrance of the vault, and stood gazing down at the shining breastplate.

“Good-bye,” he said softly. “I will not say I forgive you, only that you did not know me. It was a mistake.”

As he moved away, he was aware of a ghastly countenance at a little distance, as Glyddyr stood watching him; but his attention was taken off directly by a tall, dark figure going slowly to the door of the vault, to stand there with hands clasped, and looking down.

He could not have told afterwards what it

was that checked him from following the returning procession, but he stayed to watch that one figure, as, regardless of those around, it drooped for a moment, and then sank slowly upon its knees, and cover its face with its hands, and remain there as if weeping bitterly.

There was a group of rough quarrymen close at hand, all waiting to go up and have a last look at "the master," before discussing among themselves, once more, their project to cut and erect a granite pillar over Gartram's tomb.

They were so near Chris that he could hear the words, as one of the party said,—

"Poor Ike Woodham's widow. Ay, lads, she's lost the pride of her life once more. He was downright good to her when Woodham went."

Chris took a step or two forward, for the solitary figure attracted him, and then another and another, quietly, as he heard a low, piteous wail, and saw the woman rise tottering to her feet, swaying to and fro.

"Forgive me ! oh, forgive me !" she sobbed ;

and then she threw up her hands to clutch at vacancy.

Another moment, and she would have fallen heavily into the great granite vault, but Chris was in time: he flung an arm round her, and snatched her back insensible. She had swooned away, and had to be carried into the church till a vehicle had been procured; and Glyddyrhad the satisfaction of seeing Chris enter the rough carriage and support the suffering woman till they reached the Fort.

"Thank you, Mr Chris," she said hurriedly; "I'm better now," and as he left her immediately, she hurried up to her room, opened her box, and poured out a portion of the contents of a phial into a glass.

Half an hour later, Claude was roused from her sad musings by one of the servants, who announced that Mrs Woodham was "took bad."

It was something to divert Claude's thoughts, and she hurried up to the bedroom to lay her hand upon the woman's burning brow.

"Are you in pain, Sarah?"

“ Hah ! ”

A long sigh, as if the cool, soft hand had acted like a professor's rod in an electrical experiment, and the pain had been discharged.

“ No, no—no pain.”

The woman's eyes were closed, now that she had taken hold of the hand that had seemed to give her rest, and clung to it, keeping it by her cheek as she half-turned over in her bed ; while Claude sent word that she was going to stay there and watch. And there, in spite of Mary Dillon's prayers to let her stay, she did watch, and listen to Sarah Woodham's muttered words.

“ At rest now,” she cried twice. “ Now he will sleep ; or will he meet him face to face ? ”

Toward morning she slept calmly, and when, at daybreak, Mary stole into the room, exhaustion had done its work, and Claude was sleeping too.

CHAPTER III.

GLYDDYR REQUIRES A PICK-ME-UP.

“ GUV’NOR aboard ? ”

Glyddyr was seated in the cabin, restlessly smoking a cigar, and gazing through the open window at the Fort, where it stood up grey and glittering in the sunshine, and holding within it, protected by the memory of its builder, the two objects for which Parry Glyddyr longed.

He had made up his mind a dozen times over to go straight to the place and see Claude, but the recollection of that horrible night kept him back, and he gave up, to go on pacing the little saloon, talking to himself wildly.

For how, he said, could he approach Claude now—he, the destroyer of her father’s life—go and ask her to listen to him, talk to her and try to lead her into thinking that, before long, she must become his wife—tell her that it was

her duty, that it was her father's wish, when all the time it would seem to him that the mocking, angry spirit of the dead would be pervading his old home, looking at him furtively from his easy-chair, from his window and door, as he had seen him look a score of times before.

No : it was too horrible ; he dared not.

Three times since Gartram's death he had, with great effort, written kindly letters—he could not go to the Fort and speak—telling Claude that she was not to think him unfeeling for not calling upon her, but to attribute it to a delicacy upon his part—a desire not to intrude upon her at such a time ; and that he was going away for a cruise, but would shortly be back, then he would call.

Three times he did set sail, and as many times did he come back into the harbour after being out for a few hours, to the disgust of the crew.

“ The skipper's mad,” they said ; “ drinks a deal too much, and he'll have the ‘ horrors ’ if he don't mind. He used to be able to cruise a bit, and now, if there's a screw loose

in the engine, she careens over, or there's a cloud to wind'ard, he's back into port, and here we are getting rusty for want of a run."

It was always so. So soon as they were a few miles away, Glyddyr saw his rival taking advantage of his absence, and winning Claude over to his side, and with her the wealth that was to have been his.

"If I hadn't been such a fool," he would mutter, "I might have had it easy enough." And he would sit day after day watching the Fort with his double glass, thinking of the wealth lying there—how easily it could be snatched by foul means, seeing how well he knew the place.

But common sense would step in then, and remind him that everything would be locked up now, perhaps sealed, and that Gartram's arrangements were secure enough to set even burglars at defiance. No; it must be by fair play. He must lose no more time, but go to the Fort, and quietly show Claude that he was waiting, and contrive to make her confide in him—let him help her, so that he might gradually strengthen his position.

“And it wants no strengthening,” he said angrily; “it was her father’s wish, and we are betrothed.”

Then a fit of trembling assailed him, and he shrank from going up to the place, where it would seem as if Gartram were standing at the entrance, stern and forbidding, to keep him back.

He flew to brandy again, to steady his shaking nerves.

“No,” he gasped, as he drained his glass; “I can’t do it. I’m bad enough, but I can’t go and court the daughter after—”

“Curse you, be quiet!” he cried, smiting himself across the mouth. “Do you want to blab to everybody the story of the accident?”

He seized the binocular again to watch the way up to the Fort, in jealous dread lest Chris Lisle should go up there; but, though he was constantly watching, and often saw Chris go out from his lodgings, it was mostly with his rod upon his shoulder, and in the other direction—toward the bridge and the glen.

And so the days glided by, till one morning, as he sat watching, longing to go up to the

Fort, but putting off his visit till time had made him more confident and firm, he suddenly caught sight of a figure—the tall, sturdy figure of a man—going up to the entrance-gate.

Glyddyr was all excitement on the instant. A stranger—a well-dressed man—going up there! What could it mean?

He hardly left the little porthole through which he watched that day, but was constantly directing his glasses at the grey building.

Towards afternoon he saw the tall man come out from the study window, and begin walking up and down with his hands behind his back; then he stopped in a corner sheltered from the wind, and directly after there came a faint film of blue smoke rising, and Glyddyr looked on as the stranger walked to and fro.

“One of the old man’s best cigars, I’ll be bound,” muttered Glyddyr, laying down the glass, and biting his nails. “Who can he be?”

Ten minutes after, as Glyddyr sat there, glass in hand, he saw two figures in black come out of the front entrance, and go along the terrace a little way, to stand watching the sea.

He had it all there in miniature within the double circle of those glasses: Claude and Mary Dillon; and he could almost make out the expression upon the two pale countenances, till they moved slowly away and joined the tall gentleman who was walking up and down, and for the next hour they were in his company, ending by going in together, and the terrace was blank.

“A visitor—seems to be young—on familiar terms. There is no brother; I never heard of a cousin. Who can it be?”

Glyddyr gnawed his moustache, for here was a fresh complication. He could see no other reason for a visitor to be at Gartram's house than as a fortune-hunter in search of Claude's hand. This, then, was a new danger—from a man who was openly received there, and seemed quite at home. So that, while he was watching for the dangers of an assault upon the Fort by Chris Lisle, another had entered and taken possession.

“While I, like a cursed coward, have hung about, not daring to renew my suit.”

“Guv'nor aboard?”

Glyddyr had heard no splash of oars, nor the light jar of a boat touching his yacht side, but that voice made him start to his feet, and stand grinding his teeth.

“All right, I’ll go down.”

The next minute he was face to face with Gellow, dressed in a jaunty-looking yachting suit, and smoking a very strong cigar.

“Well, Guv’nor,” he said, with an unpleasant grin, as he looked Glyddyr in the face, “there’s my hand if you like to take it; if you don’t, you can leave it alone, for it’s all the same to me. We parted huffy and short, and I’ll own up I was going to be very nasty. You kicked out, and it made me feel it. I was going to bite, Glyddyr, but I said to myself: ‘No; we’ve been good friends, and I won’t round upon him now.’”

“Why have you come down?”

“Now, come, don’t talk like that to a man who wants to help you. Come down to see you, of course.”

“For money—to badger me for payment of some of your cursed bills.”

“Oh, Glyddyr, my dear boy, what a fellow

you are ! No ; I forgive you your nastiness, and I haven't come down for money—there."

"Then why have you come ?"

"Two reasons."

"Well ?"

"To see how you were getting on."

"That's only one."

"To have a chat with you about a certain lady."

Glyddyr winced, and Gellow noticed it, but made no sign.

"We'll talk that over after a bit. But how are you getting on over yonder ?"

Glyddyr made an impatient gesture.

"Your digestion's wrong, dear boy—that's what's the matter with you. But I congratulate you."

"Con—what ?"

"Gratulate you, dear boy. Of course, I saw all about that poor old chap dying of a drop too much."

Glyddyr shivered.

"But it's a grand thing for you. Easy for you to go and hang up your hat behind the door of as nice a bit of property as I ever saw.

Pretty young wife, and your yacht, and a race-horse or two: you'll be able to do that. By George, you're a lucky man."

Glyddyr drew a long breath, and Gellow threw himself on the padded seat.

"Might as well have shaken hands," he said; "but, bah! it's only form. Very sad about the old chap, but a grand stroke of fate for you. I'm glad you've stopped on here. Very wise: because, of course, there's sure to be a shoal of poor relatives wanting to nibble the cake—your cake—our cake, eh?"

"So that's why you've come down?"

"Yes. Been sooner, but a certain lady has taken up a lot of my time. You didn't want her here now. I've plenty of time, though. I knew you were on the spot, and that nothing would be done till the old gentleman had been put away quietly, and the lady had time to order the mourning. Oh, I say, Glyddyr! you'll excuse me, but—"

"But what, man?"

"Don't be so snaggy to a man who is helping you. But what bad form."

"I don't understand you."

"Look at yourself in the glass. Promised wife in deep mourning, and you in blue serge and a red tie. Why, you ought to be as solemn looking as an undertaker."

Glyddyr involuntarily glanced at himself in a mirrored panel at the side of the saloon.

"Change all that, dear boy. That's where I come in so useful, you see."

Glyddyr moved impatiently.

"You see, I'm not a lawyer, but I'm quite as good, or better. There are not many legal dodges I'm not up to, and you can take me with you to the house, introduce me to the young lady, and I can put her up to saving hundreds in rental on the estates. When are you going next?"

"I don't know."

"You'll want a bit of money, too. Don't stint yourself—I'm at your back all ready, so that you may cut it fat right through. By George, Glyddyr, you are lucky. The estate is about as good as a million of money."

"How do you know?" said Glyddyr savagely.

"How do I know, man?" said Gellow,

laughing. "Used my wits. Fine thing wits. You began life with a pot of money. I began life with tuppence. But it's you fellows who get the luck, and turn out millionaires."

"Look here, Mr Gellow—"

"Nonsense, nonsense, man. How huffy you will be to your best friend! Come, you must want my help, so let's talk business over quietly. When are you going over yonder?"

"I told you I don't know."

"Gammon! Don't be absurd, man, and talk rough just because we were a little out last time I was down. That's all over. You talk as if you wanted to throw me over, and get your millions without my help; but you can't do it, my dear boy. Let alone what you owe me, you know, I must stand in here."

"Stand in! What do you mean?"

"You know."

"Why, you scoundrel—"

"Now, there you go again. You force me to take up the cudgels in my defence."

"Leave this room."

"Cabin, dear boy, cabin. But what for? To go ashore, walk up to Gartram's Fort—I

mean Glyddyr's Fort, if I like it to be—ask to see the young lady, and tell her exactly what you are, and how you stand with a certain person."

Glyddyr stared at him helplessly.

"No: you wouldn't drive me to do such a thing—such a cowardly thing as it really would be—in self-defence. No, no, my dear boy; you are really too hard on an old friend—far too hard."

Glyddyr's teeth grated together in his impotent rage.

"Come, come, come, shake hands, and let me help you to pay your debts like a gentleman, and to drop into this good thing easily and nicely as can be."

There was no response.

"Tell me how matters stand. I know pretty well, but I should like to hear from you."

"You'll hear nothing from me."

"Very well. I'll tell you what I know. You can correct me where I am wrong, eh? Now, then, to begin with. Papa told the young lady she was to marry you. That ought to be

good enough to carry the day, but—there's your little but again—there's a gentleman, a Mr Christopher Lisle—old friend, playmate, and the rest of it—whom the lady likes, eh?"

Glyddyr uttered an ejaculation.

"And then there's something else on. Tall, big gent stopping at the house. Young lady and he are shut up together a deal."

"How do you know all this?" cried Glyddyr, thrown off his guard by a dread lest, after all, Claude should escape him.

"How do I know? Now, come; isn't there a tall, biggish gent staying at the house?"

Glyddyr nodded.

"Of course there is. I don't say things unless they are right. Now, what does he want?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know! Well, how long has he been there?"

"I don't know that either."

Gellow sat up suddenly, and glared at Glyddyr.

"Look here; you are not playing with a good thing, are you?"

Glyddyr shook his head.

“When were you there last?”

“Mr Gellow, I object to the line of cross-examination that you are taking.”

“Do you? Then look here, Mr Parry Glyddyr, you’ll have to object. If you don’t know what’s good for you, I must. Now, then: when were you there last?”

“I have not been there since Mr Gartram died.”

“Well, I am!” cried Gellow. “You’re engaged to the young lady, and haven’t been since the father’s death. Why?”

Glyddyr was silent.

“Good heavens, man, don’t turn stunt like that. There isn’t a tiff on, is there?”

“I felt it better not to go near the house while the poor girl is in so much trouble.”

“Hark at him!” cried Gellow excitedly, “when every day he stops away may mean ten thousand pounds.”

“She may have been ill, and I have been unwell,” said Glyddyr sullenly.

“And all the time the old man’s money might be running down the sink hole, or into

the poor relatives' pockets. What are you at?"

"I tell you I couldn't go to the house with that old man lying there dead," cried Glyddyr, with a half-suppressed shudder.

"Look at him!" cried Gellow angrily, "shivering and shaking as if he had been on the drink for six months. Not afraid of a dead man, are you?"

"Your language is revolting," cried Glyddyr passionately.

"Well, ain't it enough to make any man revolt? Why, you ought to have hold there; you ought to have taken possession and looked after everything. It's as good as your own. Oh, where would you be if I didn't look after you. Now, then: you'd better get over there at once."

"No," said Glyddyr, "not yet;" and, in spite of himself, he shuddered, and then glanced at his visitor to see if it had been noticed.

"Look at him! Why, the old man isn't there now. There, I won't bully you, dear boy. I see how it is. Ring the bell; have

in the steward, and let me mix you a pick-me-up. You're down, regularly down. I'll soon wind you up, and set you going again. I'm like a father to you."

Glyddyr obeyed in a weak, helpless way, ringing for the steward, and then ordering in the spirits.

"Bring in the *liqueurs* too, my lad—Curaçoa, Chartreuse, anything.—You want me now, old fellow, but you must take care. You're as white as wax, and your hand's all of a tremble. It won't do. You don't drink fair. Now, as soon as your man brings in the tackle, I'll give you a dose, and then you've got to go over yonder."

"No," said Glyddyr hoarsely, "no: not to-day."

"Yes, to-day. You don't want two chaps cutting the ground from under your feet.—Hah, that's your sort, steward. Better than being aboard ship, and having to put your hand in your pocket every time you want a drink. Needn't wait."

The man left the little saloon, and Gellow deftly concocted a draught with seltzer and

liqueurs, which Glyddyr took with trembling hand, and tossed off.

"Talk about making a new man!" cried Gellow. "You feel better already, don't you?"

Glyddyr nodded.

"Of course you do. Now, then, let's take the boat and go over yonder. I'm curious to see the place."

"No: impossible," said Glyddyr, flushing,

"Not a bit impossible. Come on, and I'll back you up."

"No: I will not take you there."

"Coming round more and more," said Gellow, laughing. "Well, will you go alone?"

"Not to-day."

"You'll leave those two chaps to oust you out of what is your own?"

"No. I'll go and call."

"When?"

"Now: at once."

"That's your sort," cried Gellow. "Never you say I'm not your friend."

Ten minutes later the boat was manned, and Glyddyr was ready to step in, but Gellow laid his hand upon his arm, and drew him back.

"Don't," he said, almost with tears in his eyes ; "don't go like that, dear boy."

"What do you mean?"

"Go and change that tie. If you haven't got a black one, put on a white."

Glyddyr obeyed him sullenly, and changed his tie before starting, while his visitor went down into the saloon, helped himself to a cigar, and took up a glass and the brandy decanter.

"A nip wouldn't do me any harm," he said with a laugh, and, removing the stopper, poured out a goodly dram.

It was half-way to his lips when he stopped, and poured it back.

"No," he said quickly, "I want a clear head now ; I can enjoy myself when I've got Master Glyddyr quite in trim."

He went on deck, to begin smoking and asking questions of the two men left on board ; but all the time he had an eye on Glyddyr's boat, watching it till it reached the pier-steps, and then he was able to see its owner at intervals, till he disappeared among the houses.

After this, Gellow went below and used the binocular, fixing it upon the Fort till he made

out Glyddyr approaching the house, where he stood in the entry for a few moments talking to a servant, and then turned away.

Gellow set down the glass, thrust his hands in his pockets, and stood with the cigar in the exact centre of his lips, puffing away rapidly—"For all the world like a steam launch," said one of the men left on board when talking about it afterwards—till Glyddyr came on board.

"Out," said the latter laconically.

"Fashionable slang for engaged with another chap," said Gellow, with a sneer.

Glyddyr turned upon him fiercely.

"Don't be waxey, dear boy," said Gellow ;
"but it was quite time I came down."

The progress of affairs at the Fort had been business like meanwhile.

"I beg your pardon, miss."

"It is nothing, Woodham ; come in," said Claude quietly, as the woman was withdrawing after giving an unheeded tap, and entering the room.

"Mr Trevithick's compliments, ma'am, and would you see him in the study?"

“Yes, at once,” said Claude; and both thought how she had seemed to change during the past few weeks, from the slight girl into the dignified woman. “Come, Mary.”

“Isn’t it private business?” said Mary, shrinking back strangely.

“Yes, dear; our private business,” said Claude, and they passed out, Sarah Woodham holding open the door.

Claude gave her an affectionate smile, and crossed to the study; and, as the door closed after them, Sarah Woodham stood alone in the doorway, with her hands clasped and eyes closed as she muttered softly,—

“And let me live for her—die for her,” grateful for her undeserved love, in expiation—oh, my God, in expiation!”

“Ah!” said Trevithick, rising from a chair at the table covered with papers, and looking like the great, heavy, bashful Englishman he was, as he placed chairs opposite to where he had been seated, “I am sorry to trouble you, Miss Gartram, Miss Dillon too,” he said with a smile, as he beamed upon her.

Mary gave him an angry, resentful look,

and he turned chapfallen on the instant, and became the man of business again, then cold, and seeming to perspire figures.

"Miss Dillon takes part in our little conference, Miss Gartram?" he said, rather stiffly.

"Of course. My cousin is, as it were, my sister, Mr Trevithick."

"Yes, of course," he said, as he slowly resumed his seat, pursed up his lips a little, and then he took up a pen, with the holder of which he scratched his head as he studied a paper before him on the table. "Are you ready, Miss Gartram?"

"Quite."

"Well, then, I have very bad news for you, I am sorry to say."

"I am used to bad news, Mr Trevithick."

"My dear madam, I spoke too bluntly. I meant bad news as to money matters. Forgive me my rough way. I am a man of business—a mere machine."

Claude smiled her thanks, for the words were uttered with a manly sympathy that was pleasant to her ears, and Mr Trevithick felt better, and beamed again at Mary.

Mary once more resented that beam, and Trevithick passed his hand through his hair, which more than ever resembled a brush, and sighed, and said,—

“I have gone over all papers and accounts, Miss Gartram, over and over again, and an auditor may perhaps find an error, but for the life of me I can’t tell where, for I have studied the figures night and day ever since I came here last, and I cannot bring them right. I was wrong to the extent of one, seven, eight; but I found a receipt afterwards, evidently carelessly thrown into the drawer before entering, and I wish I could find the other.”

“What other?” said Mary sharply.

“That other,” said Mr Trevitheck, beaming at her again, being silently snubbed, and collapsing once more. “As I make it, Miss Gartram,” he continued, in the most stern and business way, “you inherit from my late respected client, your father, the freehold quarry, this residence, also freehold and of great value, while the quarry is almost inexhaustible; the furniture and plate, good debts, etcetera, and five hundred and

twenty-seven thousand eight hundred and forty-nine pounds, seven shillings and fourpence, including half-a-sheet of stamps."

"Indeed?" said Claude, with a sigh.

"What bad news!" said Mary, with preternatural solemnity.

"That is to come, Miss Dillon," said Trevithick, with a look of triumph which met so sharp a glance that it was turned aside on the instant, and he took refuge in his papers.

"Yes, madam," he repeated, "that is to come. There is a very serious deficit, Miss Gartram. I find that there should have been five hundred and sixty-eight thousand, eight hundred and forty-nine, seven and fourpence—a deficit, you see, of forty-one thousand pounds—I need not add, a very large sum."

"Yes," said Claude quietly.

"Yes," said Trevithick. "Well, madam, what have you to say?"

"Nothing, Mr Trevithick."

"But really, my dear madam, I think you ought to say something about this sum,

and give me some instructions what to do to recover it."

Claude shook her head gravely.

"No," she said, "I cannot regard this as a loss in the presence of one so much greater. Thank you very much, Mr Trevithick, for all that you have done; and now, pray, give me some advice as to what to do with this money."

"Good, my dear madam, and that I am sure you will do."

"I mean as to its investment."

"To be sure. I was coming to that, for the sooner this heavy amount is out of your hands the more comfortable you will be."

"I said something like this to my cousin a little while back, Mr Trevithick," said Mary sharply. "Pray give her some better advice than that."

The solicitor looked disconcerted, but he recovered himself.

"Well, Miss Gartram, I have plenty of clients who want money, and would agree to pay five per centum; but, excuse me, you don't want to make money, and, as your

father's trusted legal adviser, I shall give his daughter the most valuable advice I can."

"And what is that, Mr Trevithick?"

"Let me at once invest all this money for you in Consols. Only two and a half now, but there will be no fluctuations, no heavy dividend one year, nothing at all the next, and some day perhaps failure. It is very poor advice, perhaps, but safe as the Bank of England."

"Take the necessary steps at once, Mr Trevithick," said Claude decisively.

"Thank you, madam," making a note; "it shall be done."

"And that is all?" said Claude.

"Oh, no, my dear madam. The next question is this residence. If you will part with it, I have a client who will give a very handsome sum—its full value—and take it, furniture and all. Cash."

"And is that all?" said Claude quietly.

"No, madam, there is the quarry. I should advise you to sell that to a small company. You can get your own price, for

it is very valuable, and retain shares in it if you liked; but I should say no—sell; add the purchase money to that for this house, and let me invest it in Consols also.”

“No,” said Claude, rising, and speaking firmly, though with tears in her eyes; “the opening of that quarry was my father’s dearest enterprise, and the building of this house his greatest pleasure. While I live, his quarry and his people shall be my life business, and nothing shall be touched, nothing shall be changed in this his house.”

“My dear Miss Gartram,” said the lawyer, colouring like a girl, as he rose and stretched out his hand to take Claude’s, which he raised reverently to his lips, “I feel proud of the confidence you placed in me. I feel far more proud now, and I honour you for what you have just said. Your wishes shall be carried out. One word more. You will require some assistance over the commercial matters of the quarry—a gentleman learned in stone, and—”

“No, Mr Trevithick, I shall only want help as to the monetary affairs of the busi-

ness. That I hope you will oblige me by supervising yourself. The workpeople will help me in the rest."

The lawyer bowed, and once more beamed on Mary, but looked stern again.

"Now, have you done, Mr Trevithick?" said Claude.

"Not quite. The deficit."

"If, as you say, there is a deficit, it must remain. There is enough."

"But my late client would not have rested till it was put straight."

"No," said Claude dreamily; "but my father may have had some project of which we are ignorant. We had better wait. You will stay with us a few days longer?"

"I should say no," replied Trevithick; "but I cannot conscientiously leave these premises till this money is safe. Till then, my dear madam, I am your guest."

Claude would have spoken again, but the look she cast round the study brought up such a flood of painful memories that she could only make a sign to Mary to follow, as she hurried from the room.

“A woman any man might love,” said the lawyer, as soon as he was alone. “I hope no money-hunting scoundrel will catch her up. No; she is too strong-minded and firm. Now, what have I done to offend little Mary?” he added, with a sigh. “Bless her, I don’t get along with her as I could wish.”

He was quiet and thoughtful for a few moments, and then began tapping the table.

“Gartram had that forty-one thousand. His books say so, and he was correct as an actuary. Some one knew the secret of this room, and got at that cash.

“Yes. I should like to find that out. It would please little Mary, too.”

CHAPTER IV.

WIMBLE SEIZES THE CLUE.

“ LOVE is blind,” said Michael Wimble, with a piteous sigh. “ Yes, love is blind.”

He had been a great many times past Mrs Sarson’s cottage, always with a stern determination in his breast to treat her with distance and resentment, as one who shunned him for the sake of her lodger ; but so surely as he caught a glimpse of the pleasant lady at door or window, his heart softened, and he knew that if she would only turn to him, there was forgiveness for her and more.

Upon the morning in question he had had his constitutional, and found a splendid specimen of an auk washed up, quite fresh, which he meant to stuff and add to his museum.

An hour later a neat little servant-maid came to the door with a parcel and a letter.

“ With missus’s compliments.”

Wimble took the letter and parcel, his hands trembling and a mist coming before his eyes, for it was Mrs Sarson's little maid.

"We are all wrong," he said, as he hurried in, his heart beating complete forgiveness, happiness in store, and everything exactly as he wished.

He turned back to the door, slipped the bolt, and then seated himself at the table with his back to the window, and cut the string of the parcel with a razor.

"She has relented, and it is a present," he said to himself, as he tingled with pleasure ; "a present and a letter."

He stopped, with his fingers twitching nervously and his eyes going from parcel to note and back again.

Which should he open first—note or parcel ?

He took the parcel, unfastened the paper, and found a neat cardboard box ; and he had only to take off the lid to see its contents, but he held himself back from the fulfilment of his delight by taking up the note, opening it, and reading,—

"Mrs Sarson would be greatly obliged by

Mr Wimble's attention to the enclosed at once. To be returned within a week."

"Attention—returned—a week!" faltered Wimble; and with a sudden snatch he raised the lid, and sat staring dismally at its contents.

"And me to have seen her all these times and not to know that," he groaned, as he rested his elbows on the table and his brow upon his hands, gazing the while dismally into the box. "Ah! false one—false as false can be. Why, I've gazed at her fondly hundreds o' times, but love is blind, and—yes," he muttered, as he took the object from the box and rested it upon his closed fist in the position it would have occupied when in use, "there is some excuse. As good a skin parting as I ever saw. One of Ribton's, I suppose."

There was a long and dismal silence as Michael Wimble, feeling that he was thoroughly disillusioned, slowly replaced the object in its box.

"How can a woman be so deceitful, and all for the sake of show? And me never to know that she wore a front!"

"Ah, well!" he sighed, "I can't touch it to-day," and rising slowly he replaced it in the box, dropped the note within, roughly secured the packet, and opened a drawer at the side.

As he pulled the drawer sharply out, something rolled from front to back, and then, as the drawer was out to its full extent, rolled down to the front.

He picked it out, dropped the cardboard box within, and shut it up, ignoring the bottle he held in his hand as he walked away to slip the bolt back and throw open the door.

He was just in time to receive a customer in the shape of Doctor Asher, who entered and nodded.

"I want you, Wimble," he said. "When can you come up? Beginning to show a little grey about the roots, am I not?"

"Yes, sir, decidedly," said Wimble, as the doctor took off his hat, and displayed his well-kept dark hair.

"When will you come, then?"

"When you like, sir," said Wimble, unconsciously rubbing the tip of his nose with the cork of the little bottle he held in his hand.

“To-morrow afternoon, then,” said the doctor sharply; “and you needn’t shake the hair dye in my face.”

“Beg pardon, sir? Oh, I see! That’s not hair dye, sir.”

“What is it, then? New dodge for bringing hair on bald places?”

He held out his hand for the bottle, and the barber passed it at once.

“Oh, no, sir,” he said, “nothing of that kind.”

With the action born of long habit, the doctor took out the cork, sniffed, held the bottle up to the light, shook it, applied a finger to the neck, shook the bottle again, tasted the drug at the end of his finger, and quickly spat it out.

“Why, Wimble, what the dickens are you doing with chloral?”

“Nothing, sir, nothing; only an old bottle.”

“Throw it away, then,” said the doctor hastily. “Don’t take it. Very bad habit. Recollect that’s how poor Mr Gartram came to his end. Good day. Come round, then, at three.”

“Yes, sir, certainly, sir; but you forgot to—”

“Oh, I beg pardon. Yes, of course,” said the doctor, handing back the bottle, and then, beating himself with his right-hand glove, he walked hastily out of the place.

Wimble stood looking after his visitor till he was out of sight, and then walked slowly back into his museum to operate upon the dead bird, which lay where he had placed it upon a shelf ready for skinning.

“Ah,” he said mournfully, as he rubbed his nose slowly with the cork of the little bottle, “what a world of deception it is. There is nothing honest. We’re all more or less like specimens. A front, and me not to have known it all this time. If she had taken me sooner into her confidence, I wouldn’t have cared. The doctor did. Hah! I wonder who ever suspected him, with his clear dark locks, as I keep so right. Yes, he’s a deceiver, and without me what would he look like in a couple of months?—Deceit, deceit, deceit.—And I trusted her so. It’s taking a mean advantage of a man.

“Well, it was a mark of confidence, and perhaps I have been all wrong. It shows she is waiting to trust me, and ought I to? Well, we shall see.”

Michael Wimble looked a little brighter, and then his eyes fell upon the bottle, which he shook as the doctor had shaken it, took out the cork, applied a finger to it, and tasted in the same way, quickly spitting it out as he became aware of the sharp taste.

“What did he say: chloral? Don’t take any of it. No, I sha’n’t do that.”

Wimble suddenly became thoughtful and dreamy as he replaced the cork, and he seemed to see the bright ray of light once more on the dry patch of sand beyond where the tide had reached.

Then he thought about Gartram’s death by chloral.

“Might have been the same bottle,” he said thoughtfully; “took what he wanted, and then threw it out of the window.”

He looked at the tiny drop in the bottom, turned it over and over, and his thoughts seemed to run riot in his brain, till he grew

confused at their number. But after a time he followed the one theme again.

“What a piece of evidence to have brought up at the inquest. How important a witness I should have been. But why should he have thrown the bottle out of the window? He didn’t poison himself. He wasn’t the man to do that. Thousands upon thousands of money. Everything he could wish for. Regular king of the place. He wouldn’t do that—he couldn’t.”

Wimble stood with his brow wrinkled up, and then all at once, as if startled by the suddenness of a thought, he dropped the bottle on the oilcloth and drew back, gazing at it in a horrified way, his eyes dilating, and the white showing all round.

“Somebody must have given it to him.”

“No, no. They wouldn’t do that; it would be murder. No one would try to murder him.”

He passed his hand over his forehead, and drew it away quite wet.

“His money!” he half whispered, as the thought seemed to grow and grow. “They say he kept thousands up there. Or some one who hated him, as lots of people did.”

Wimble dropped into his shaving chair, and sat thinking of the numbers of workpeople who had quarrelled with Gartram and spoken threateningly ; but he did not feel that it was possible for any one of these to have done such a deed.

“Some one who hated him—some one who wanted to get rid of him—some one who, who—no, no, no, it’s too horrible to think about. I wouldn’t know if I could.”

He lifted the little bottle between his finger and thumb, and drew back with his arm extended to the utmost to hurl the little vessel across the road, and right out toward the sea.

But he checked himself thoughtfully, drew back, and went across his shop to the side. Here he stood, bottle in hand, thinking deeply, before slowly opening the drawer and placing it in a corner.

“It would be very valuable,” he said softly, “if that was the bottle some one used to poison the old man ; and if it was, why, I haven’t got a specimen in my museum that would attract people half so much. ‘The

Danmouth murder; the bottle that held the poison.' Why, they'd come in hundreds to see it."

He took the phial out again, for it seemed to have a strange fascination for him, and after staring at it till his hands grew moist, he took out a piece of white paper, carefully rolled it therein, and placed it in another drawer, which he had to unlock, and fastened afterwards with the greatest care.

"That bottle's worth at least a hundred pound," he said huskily, as he put the key in his pocket. "It will be quite a little fortune to me.

"Somebody who hated him — somebody who wanted him out of the way," he said, as he tapped his teeth with the key. "No, I can't think, and won't try any more. I'm not a detective, and I don't want to know.

"Some one who hated him and had quarrelled with him, and who wanted him out of the way."

In spite of his determination not to think any more of the subject, it came back persistently, and at last, to clear his brain and

drive away the thoughts, he took down his hat, and determined to let the museum take care of itself for an hour, while he walked down along the beach.

He knew, as he came to this determination, that he would go straight down beneath the Fort, and look at the spot where he found the bottle; but, all the same, he felt that he must go, and, putting on his hat, he took the key out from inside of the door, and standing just inside the shop, began to put the key into the outer portion of the lock, as the thought came again more strongly than ever—

“Some one who hated him and had quarrelled with him, and wanted him out of the way.”

He was in the act of closing his door as a quick step came along the path, and as the door closed, a voice said to some one,—

“How do, Edward?” and the speaker passed on with creel on back and salmon rod over his shoulder.

Wimble darted back into the museum, shut the door, and stood trembling in the middle of the place.

“Oh!” he said, in a hoarse whisper, as the great drops stood out upon his brow. “What did Brime say?”

He shivered, and his voice dropped into a whisper.

“Mr Chris Lisle! He was there that night!”

CHAPTER V.

MR WIMBLE IS IN DOUBT.

“WANT lodgings, sir?” said Reuben Brime taking his short black pipe from his lips, and gazing straight out to sea, as if he thought there was plenty of room for a good long rest out there. Then straightening himself from having a good, thoughtful lean on the cliff rail, where he had been having his evening’s idle after the day’s work done, he turned, and, looking thoughtfully at a youngish man in tweeds, as if he were a plant not growing quite so satisfactorily as could be wished, he said again, in a tone of mild inquiry,—“Lodgings?”

“Yes, lodgings,” said the newcomer shortly.

“Well, I was trying to think of some, sir; and I could have told you of the very thing if something as I had in hand had come up—I mean off.”

“ Indeed ! ”

“ Yes, sir,” said the gardener thoughtfully. “ I don’t mind who knows it. I’d got as nice a little cottage in my eye as any man would wish to have there, the money to buy all the furniture, as much more as was wanted, theirs being very old ; and I could have said to you, ‘ There’s a bedroom and a setten’-room, and the best of attendance.’ ”

“ But it is not in hand, eh ? ”

“ In hand, sir ? No, sir ; nothing like in hand.”

“ How’s that ? ”

“ Ah, well, I don’t care who knows it now, sir. Mebbe if she heard how it’s talked about, and the man’s disappointment, she may get better, and alter her mind.”

“ She ? The lady ? ”

“ Yes, sir ; the lady, as I may say I’d engaged myself to ; but she’s took bad and strange, and I suppose it’s all off.”

“ Ah, well, I’m sorry to hear that,” said the stranger, looking amused, and as if he thought the man he addressed was a little wanting in brains.

"Thank you, sir, kindly. Lodgings?—no. You see this isn't a seaside place."

"Then what do you call it?" said the stranger.

"Call it, sir? Well, we calls it Danmouth, or, mostly, Dan'orth, because you see it's shorter, and more like one word."

"Oh, yes, I know the name; but what do you call it if it isn't a-seaside place?"

"I calls it a port, sir, and as good a little port as there is anywheres about this coast. Dinton and Bartoe and Minxton's seaside places, with lots of visitors and bathing machines, and bands and Punch and Judies. Lodgings, eh? Let me see. Lodgings for a gentleman? What do you say to the Harbour Inn? They've got as good a drop of beer there as a man could wish to drink."

"No, no, I don't want to be at a public house. I'm here for a fortnight's fishing, and I want nice, comfortable apartments."

"And you want comfortable apartments?" said Brime respectfully, as he rubbed his sun-burned face with the stem of his pipe. "Fishing, eh? You mean pottering about with a

rod and line; not going with a boat and nets?"

"Quite right."

"I've got it," said the gardener. "Mrs Sarson; she lets lodgings. Stop a moment. I'll take you on to the museum."

"Museum! Hang it all, man, I'm not a specimen."

Brime laughed for the first time for a month.

"No, sir, you don't look as if you was stuffed. I was going to take you to our barber's. He knows everything; and he'll tell us whether Mrs Sarson can take you in."

"Is it far—the museum?"

"Only yonder. Just where you see that man looking out of the door."

"Ah, yes," said the stranger sharply. "Yours seems a busy place."

"Tidy, sir, tidy."

"Whose castle's that?"

"Mr Gartram's, sir. Leastwise it was. He's gone."

"Oh! Dead?"

"Yes, sir. The hardest and the best master

as ever was. Some on us 'll miss him, I expect."

"Curious kind of master, my lad, and likely to be missed. Gartram? Oh, yes, I know; the stone quarry man. Mr Trevithick, in our town, has to do with his affairs."

"If you talked all night, sir, you couldn't say a truer word than that. Mr Trevithick, sir, very big man, lawyer."

"Yes; they call him Jumbo our way."

Kek!

Brime burst out into a monosyllabic half laugh, and then stopped short as Wimble was drawing back into his den to let them pass.

"Here, Mr Wimble, sir, this gent wants to ask something about Mrs Sarson."

"Eh! Yes!" said the barber sharply; and the suspicious look which had been gathering of late in his face grew more intense. "Step in, sir, pray," he added eagerly.

"Oh, that's not worth while now," said the stranger, passing his hand over his chin. "Give you a look in to-morrow. My friend here thought you could tell me about Mrs Sarson's lodgings."

“Yes,” said Brime; “and—of course, this gent wants to go fishing, and Mr Lisle’s always fishing.”

“Mr Lisle?” said the stranger. “Christopher Lisle?”

“That’s the man, sir,” said the barber sharply. “You know anything about him, sir?”

“Only that he has a good heavy account with our bank.”

Wimble looked sharply at the stranger, with his head on one side, and more than one eager question upon his lips. But the new-comer felt that he had made a slip by talking too freely, and prevented him by asking a question himself.

“Do you think Mrs Sarson could accommodate me?”

“No, sir,” said Wimble, looking at him searchingly. “No: she has no room, I am sure. Take the gentleman up to Mrs Lamp-ton’s at the top of the cliff road. I daresay she could accommodate him.”

“Why, of course,” said Brime; “the very place. I never thought of that.”

"No, Mr Brime," said Wimble patronisingly, as he looked longingly at the visitor with cross-examination in his breast. "Say I recommended the gentleman."

"All right. Come along, sir, I'll show you ; and if you want a few worms for fishing, I'm your man."

"Worms ?" said the visitor, laughing. "I always use flies."

"Most gents do, sir. Mr Chris Lisle does. But the way to get hold of a good fish in a river is with a whacking great worm."

"Do you know Mr Lisle ?"

"Know him ? Poor young man, yes."

"Poor ? I don't call a gentleman who lately came in for a big fortune poor."

"Big fortune, sir ? Mr Chris Lisle come in for a big fortune, sir ? Hurrah ! Our young lady will be glad."

The visitor was ready to pull himself up again sharp, for this was another mistake.

Brime stopped, smiling, at a pretty cottage, where fuchsias and hydrangeas were blooming side by side with myrtles, and was going off,

when the vistor offered him a shilling for his trouble.

“Thankye, sir, and I hope you’ll be comfortable,” said the gardener, descending the chief path.—“Well, I am glad. Come in for a large fortune. Now, if I were him, I’d just send Mr Glyddyr to the right about, and get the business settled as soon as it seemed decent after master’s death. He is a good sort, is Mr Lisle, and he’s fond enough of her. Why, they’ll be married now, and keep up the old place just as it is; and if I speak when we want more help, he isn’t the gent to tell a hard-working man to get up a bit earlier and work a bit later. Not he. He made a friend of me when he gave me that half-sov’rin, and I made a friend of him when I caught him. My, what a lark it was when I dropped on to him, and he thought it was the governor! I know he did.”

Reuben Brime smiled as he had not smiled for days, and a minute or two later he grinned outright. From his point of vantage, high up the cliff side, he could see to the mouth of the glen, and there, to his intense delight, he

could just make out two figures in deep mourning, one tall and graceful, and the other short, and her head low down between her shoulders, walking away from him in the distance, and, not far behind, a sturdy-looking man in light brown tweeds, with a fishing creel slung at his back, and a rod over his shoulder, trying hard to overtake the pair in front.

“Wouldn’t give much for Mr Glyddyr’s chance,” thought Brime, as he watched the trio out of sight. “Been an awfully cloudy time, but the sun’s coming strong now, and things ’ll grow. What a fellow I am to give up because she was a bit off. Friends with the new guv’nor means friends with the new missus, and as Sarah about worships her, and ’ll do what she tells her, why, it ’ll come right in the end.”

He walked on, building castles as he went, and in the height of his elation he said, half aloud,—

“It’s only six pounds a year, and I could let it till she said yes. Hang me if I don’t take the cottage after all.”

“Well, Mr Brime,” said a voice at his elbow, “did Mrs Lampton take the gentleman in?”

“Eh? Oh, I don’t know, as I didn’t stop. But she’d be sure to.”

“Oh, yes, it will be all right,” said Wimble. “But you’ll come in, Mr Brime?”

“No. I think I’ll get back now, and finish my pipe by the cliff.”

“With a beard like that, sir? Better have it off.”

“Eh? No, it isn’t shaving day.”

“Your beard grows wonderfully fast, Mr Brime, believe me, sir. I wonder at a young man like you being so careless of his personal appearance. You’ll be wanting to marry some day, sir, and there’s nothing goes further with the ladies than seeing a man clean shaved.”

It was not quite a random shot, for Wimble had wheedled out a little respecting the gardener’s future, and he had only to draw back with a smile for the man to follow him in, passing his hand thoughtfully over his chin, wondering whether it had anything to do with the very severe rebuff he had more than once received.

Once more in the chair, tied up in the cloth, and with his face lathered, he was at Wimble's mercy ; and as the razor played about his nose and chin, giving a scrape here and a scrape there, the barber cross-examined the gardener in a quiet, unconcerned way, that would have been the envy of an Old Bailey counsel. In very few minutes he had drawn out everything that the gardener had learned, and so insidiously soft were the operator's words, that Brime found himself unconsciously inventing and supplying particulars that the barber stowed up in his brain cell, ready for future use.

"There, Mr Brime," he said, after delivering the final upper strokes with a dexterity that was perfect, though thrilling, from the danger they suggested, "I think you will say, sir, that a good shave is not dear at the price."

These last words were accompanied by little dabs with a wet sponge, to remove soapy patches among the thick whiskers, and then the towel was handed, and the victim walked to the glass.

"Yes, it does make a difference in a man," he said, as he dabbed and dried.

“Difference, sir? It’s a duty to be clean-shaved. To a man, sir, speaking from years of experience, a beard is hair, natural hair. To a woman, sir, it is nothing of the kind. A woman cannot help it, sir; it is born in her, but to her, sir, a beard is simply dirt.”

“Hah!” ejaculated the gardener, and he thought deeply.

“Yes, sir; I’ve often heard them call it so. Even on the properest man, it is, in their eyes—dirt.”

Brime paid and took his departure, while Wimble plunged at once among his own dark thoughts.

“That man is blind as a mole,” he said, “and can see nothing which is not just before his eyes. He can dig a garden, but he cannot dig down into his own brain. How horrible! how strange! And how the blackest deeds will come out in a way nobody who is guilty suspects. Yesterday, quite a poor man—to-day, very rich—a heavy banking account—come in for a fortune. Yes, it’s all plain enough now. Now, ought I to do anything—and if so, what?”

CHAPTER VI.

TWO MEETINGS.

AFTER a long stay within the walls of the Fort, Claude had yielded to her cousin's importunity, and gone out.

She felt the truth of the French saying before she had gone a hundred yards from her gates. It was only the first step that cost, for, as she passed along the little row of houses facing the harbour, there was a smile from one, a look of glad recognition from another, and several of the rough fishermen who were hanging about waiting for signs of fish doffed their hats with a hearty "How do, miss?"

A thrill of pleasure ran through her, and a feeling of awakening as from a time of sloth, as she realised that life could not be passed as a time for mourning.

She turned to speak to Mary, after another or two of these friendly salutations to the

lady of the Fort, and was met by a smile and a nod.

“There, I told you so, Claudie. It was quite time you came out. It was a duty.”

Claude felt her cheeks burn slightly as she noted the direction in which they were going, but she kept on, feeling truly that she would have felt the same whichever direction they had taken.

It was a glorious evening, with the sun turning the whole of the western sky to orange and gold; and, as she breathed in the soft elastic air, watched the brilliant shimmer of colour as of liquid flames at sea, she listened to the murmurs of the ripple among the boulders, where the little river ran swiftly down from the glen, and the twitter of the birds in birch and fir. The joyous sensation that filled her breast was painful, even to drawing tears.

It was to her like the first walk after a long illness, when there is a feeling akin to extasy, and life seems never to have been so beautiful before. She could not speak, but wandered on beside her cousin—over the bridge, where

they paused to gaze down at the golden-amber water, sparkling and foaming on its way to the sea. Ever onward and up the glen, but not far before the sound of a large pebble, kicked by a heavy boot out into the rippling water, where it fell with a splash, told them that they were not alone, and the next minute Chris had overtaken them and held out his hand.

There was a look almost of reproach in Claude's eyes, as, with quivering lip, she laid her hand in his, and yielded it, as he gently and reverently carried it to his lips.

"I have not been to you ; I have not written," he said, in a deep voice. "I felt that it was a duty to respect your sorrow. I have felt for you none the less deeply."

She stood looking gravely in his eyes, and he went on,—

"Under the painful circumstances, I could not come to you ; I was driven from your side. But Claude, dearest," he continued, with the passion within him making his words vibrate, as it were, in her breast, and her heart flutter as it had never beaten before

"I love you more dearly than ever; and listen, darling—I would not say it, but cruel words have been spoken about my mercenary thoughts."

"Don't, don't," she murmured.

"But one word—for your sake."

"No, no," she cried piteously.

"Then for mine," he pleaded.

"What do you wish to say?"

"Then I am no longer the poor beggar I was called."

"Chris!"

"But comparatively rich, love. I only said that so that those who would see evil in my acts may meet something to act as a shield to cast off these malicious darts. No, no, don't withdraw your hand, dearest. I know how you have suffered. I have suffered too—sorrow for you—bitter jealousy of that man."

"Chris," she whispered, with a look of appeal, "for pity's sake! I am weak and ill—I cannot bear it."

"Forgive me," he cried; "what a selfish brute I am! There, I hold your dear hand

once more, and I am satisfied. I will not say another word, only go and wait patiently. My Claude cannot be anything but all that is kind and just to me. I'll go and wait."

She stood looking in his eyes, and he clasped her hand, while the soft, ruddy glow which struck right up the glen seemed to bathe them both in its warm light. Her lips moved to speak, but no sound came, though her eyes were full of joy and pride in the brave, manly young fellow whose words had thrilled her to the core.

"If it could have been," she felt. And then a pang of agony shot through her, and she shuddered.

"How worn and thin you look, darling," he said tenderly. "My poor, poor girl."

This seemed to unloose the frozen words within her; the tears gushed from her eyes, and she tried to withdraw her hand, but it was too tightly held.

"Chris," she said at last, and she clung to his hand as she spoke, "I do not doubt you. I know all you say is the simple truth, but it seems cruel to me now."

“Cruel! My darling!”

“Hush, pray hush. It would be cruel, too, in me to let you speak like this about what can never, never be.”

“Claude! What are you saying?”

“That I have my poor father’s words still ringing in my ears. He forbade it, and I cannot go in opposition to his wishes.”

“Claude!”

“I cannot help it. It is better that the words should be spoken now, and the pain be over. Chris, when we meet again it must be as friends.”

“No,” he cried passionately; “you must meet me as my promised wife.”

“It is impossible,” she said faintly, after a painful pause. “No, Chris, as my friend—brother, if you wish, but that is at an end.”

“But why—no, no; don’t answer me. You are ill and hysterical, dear. You think seriously of words that will grow fainter and of less import as the time goes on. There, come. Let us put all this aside now. I am content that we have met, and you know the

truth—that I have spoken, and so plainly, once again.”

“No; you must hear me now,” she said with a sigh, that seemed to be torn from her breast.

“Well, then, speak,” he said, with a smile full of pity.

“Once more,” she said, after a pause; “you must never speak to me again as you have to-night.”

“Why?”

“You know, Chris, my father’s wish.”

“The result of a mistake. Claude, you love me.”

She made an effort once more to free herself, and stood with her eyes fixed upon the ground.

“Claude,” he cried passionately, “you will tell me that.”

“I cannot,” she said firmly.

He let her hand fall from between his, and a curiously heavy look came slowly into his face as the jealous anger within him began to seethe.

“You cast at me your father’s words,” he said hurriedly.

“I am obliged to remind you of his wish.”

“That you should marry this man, this Glyddyr. Claude, you cannot, you dare not tell me this.”

“I do not tell you this,” she said, quickly and excitedly. “No, that is impossible. I could not be his wife : I must not be yours.”

“You are speaking in riddles.”

“Riddles that you can easily read,” she said sadly. “Chris, my life is marked out for me. I have my duties waiting. I cannot, I will not marry a man I do not love, but I will not disobey my poor dead father and listen to you. Good-bye now—I can bear no more. Some day we can meet again patiently and calmly as in the happy old times.”

“Yes,” he said, with the angry feeling passing away, “I shall wait contented, for you will not marry this man—you promise me that?”

“Claude, dear ; Claude.”

They had neither of them given Mary a thought, and she had discreetly walked away ; but to return now quickly, and as they raised their eyes it was to see her close at hand, and

some fifty yards away Parry Glyddyr advancing fast.

Claude saw that Glyddyr looked white and strange, but it was the rage in Chris Lisle's eyes which startled her, as Glyddyr strode up, with extended hand, ignoring the presence of her companion.

"Claude, don't leave them alone, as there'll be trouble," whispered Mary, and her cousin's words seemed to cast a lurid light upon the situation.

She did not give Glyddyr her hand, but turned to Chris and said gently,—

"Good-bye. It will be better that we should not meet again—not yet."

He took the hand gravely, let his own close over it in a firm, warm clasp, and released it silently.

"Mary."

Claude turned to go, and her cousin went to her side white as ashes. Glyddyr stood looking from one to the other, as if hesitating what to do.

"Claude, do you hear me," whispered Mary.

"Mr Glyddyr, are you going this way?" said Claude in a low deep voice.

"Yes, of course," he cried, with his face lighting up, and darting a look of triumph at his rival, who stood motionless, with one hand resting upon his rod as though it were a spear, he went on down the glen by Claude's side.

"Mr Lisle — Chris — do you not hear? Good-bye."

Chris started back as it were into life, and saw that Mary had run back and laid her hand in his.

"Ah, little woman," he said, with a gentle, pitying tone in his voice, "I was thinking, I suppose. Good-bye, Mary, and don't fall in love, dear; it's a mistake."

"Chris," she cried, with the tears in her beautiful eyes, as she gazed at the broad-shouldered sturdy fellow, "why do you talk like that?"

"Why do I talk like that?" he said bitterly. "Because I am a weak fool, I suppose. Look there."

He pointed down the glen.

“Chris!”

“There, run after them, and play propriety, little lady,” he said bitterly. “Or no—they do not miss you; better stop behind, or shall I see you home?”

“Chris, dear Chris,” she whispered.

“Don’t talk to me,” he cried. “I’m half mad. Good-bye, Mary, good-bye.”

He turned sharply and hurried away up the glen, and as Mary watched, she heard his reel begin to sing as he walked on down by the stream, making casts blindly among the boulders.

“Poor fellow,” she said, as she turned and walked swiftly away. “I wish I had not said a word.”

She gave one more glance back and hurried after the retreating pair. Had she looked long enough she would have seen Chris Lisle stride into the first clump of trees and throw himself down with his face buried in his arms, and there he was lying still long after darkness had come on, and the stars were peering down and glistening in the rushing stream.

CHAPTER VII.

GLYDDYR ENDORSES A NOTE.

“THERE, I’m off back to London town to keep a certain party quiet. You are going on all right here. You are bound to win, but don’t be rash—play her very carefully.”

Glyddyr nodded.

“And now take my advice; go and see a doctor—that man—what’s his name? Get him to set you up, dear boy. There: good-bye. Bless you, my son. It’s perhaps a million. Don’t play with it.”

“Haven’t got it to play with.”

“No; but you will have it by-and-by. There: once more, good-bye. Be gentle with her. Go early in the day, and promise me you’ll call at the doctor’s.”

“Yes, I promise,” said Glyddyr; and he stood watching Gellow, as he was rowed ashore, cursing him bitterly the while, but confessing in his own mind that he was right.

"Yes, I'll go and see Asher," he muttered. "He'll set me up. I must go on with it. I'll be a good husband to her. It'll be like doing penance for the past—ugh!"

He shuddered and looked ghastly.

"It's being low makes me think of it so much," he continued. "Yes; as soon as the boat gets back I'll go and see Asher."

Vacillating to a degree, he was firm in this, and stepped into the boat as soon as it reached the yacht, ordering the men to put him ashore, and this done, the men watching him as he walked sharply away, clinging to the hope that a strong tonic would calm his feelings and give him strength to go on with his plans, and trusting to time to dull the agony of his thoughts.

"Seems horrible to go on," he said. "But it will be like penance; and, poor old boy, he did wish it." Then aloud—"Doctor Asher at home?"

He was shown into the doctor's consulting-room to be warmly received.

"Yes, of course," said the doctor. "I don't wonder you are a bit run down. I'll soon set you right."

Then after a short examination, and a little professional business.

“Wonder whether he knows what’s really the matter with me;” thought Glyddyr.

“Wonder whether he thinks me such a fool as not to know that he is saturated with brandy?” said the doctor to himself, as he composed a draught, while Glyddyr took up a card box from the chimney-piece, opened it mechanically, and then, as the doctor raised his hand to the shelf where the chloral bottle stood, the box slipped through Glyddyr’s fingers, fell on the edge of the fender, burst open, and the cards were scattered over the rug, and beneath the fireplace.

“I beg your pardon.”

“Oh, never mind! Don’t stop to pick them up.”

Glyddyr paid no heed, but nervously collected the pack together, rose with them in his hands, and then, watching the doctor as he wrote out the directions on a label, involuntarily, and as if naturally from feeling the cards in his hands, began to shuffle them slowly.

The doctor smiled.

"You play a bit, I see."

"Oh! yes, of course," said Glyddyr, hastily setting down the pack. "Confoundedly stupid of me to drop them."

"Nonsense! Very unprofessional to have them here, eh?"

"You play, then?" said Glyddyr, repeating the doctor's query.

"Not often. No one to play with. A game now and then would do you good."

"Yes, yes," said Glyddyr, eagerly. "Come on board. I'm very dull there."

"Most happy if you'll have a game here sometimes."

Glyddyr accepted the proposal so readily that in a few minutes they were seated together at piquet, and when the patient rose he was ten pounds in the doctor's debt.

"I shall have to give you my I O U, doctor," said Glyddyr, "I have no cash down here."

"All right, my dear sir," said the doctor, smilingly; and Glyddyr wrote the indebtedness upon half a sheet of notepaper, to go

away feeling better for his visit, and after the doctor had promised to go on board the yacht that night and give him his revenge.

This was given, Glyddyr managing to win twenty pounds, and receiving back his I O U and a ten-pound note.

"You London gentlemen are too clever for me," said the doctor, laughingly. "But never mind ; I shall have to win that back."

"Mustn't win much off him if I'm to take his medicine," said Glyddyr to himself. "Might give me too strong a dose. Ugh ! What a fool I am to think such things as that."

"I believe he's half a sharper," said the doctor to himself as he was rowed ashore. "But never mind ; let him marry her. He will be another patient to the good, and I dare say I can manage him, clever as he is."

The next day Glyddyr called at the Fort, and found Claude at home. She received him with Mary by her side, and the triumphant feelings that filled his breast after the last encounter with Chris slowly filtered away.

He was not himself he knew, feeling no-

thing like so strong and well, through having gone to bed the previous night perfectly sober, and refraining that morning from taking what he called a peg to string himself up, for fear that the odour should accompany him on his visit.

He told himself that he never showed to worse advantage, for he was troubled all through the visit by a horrible sensation of nervous dread, starting at every sound, and hurriedly bringing his visit to a close.

On the other hand, Claude thought she had never liked her visitor so well.

"He seemed so full of respectful deference," she said.

"Yes," said downright Mary, "but I wish he would take a dislike to the place. I'm sick of seeing his yacht moored in the harbour. It's beginning to blow. I wish the wind would blow it right away."

But Glyddyr had not the least intention of going. In spite of his hurried ending to his visit, he came away feeling better.

"It's natural that I should feel uncomfortable there, but it will soon wear off, and it's

plain enough to see that I am gradually becoming welcome. Gellow's right," he said, recalling one of their conversations. "Patience is the thing.

"I'm all right. Wish I could feel like this when I am there."

"Good-morning."

"Ah, doctor."

"Why it's 'Ah, patient.' You're better, Glyddyr, decidedly. You must keep on with that tonic."

"Yes, ever so much better," said Glyddr, who was flushed with hope. "Come on board and dine with me."

"Thanks, no. I'm not such a very bad sailor, but not good enough to enjoy my dinner with the table dancing up and down. Going to be a gale."

"Humph! Yes, I suppose it will be a bit rough, even if we shift the moorings. Never mind, come and dine with me at the hotel and we can have a private room, and a hand at cards with our coffee."

"Oh, I don't know," said the doctor, hesitating.

"Yes, come," said Glyddyr eagerly. "I'm dull and hipped. Want a companion. Do me more good than your tonics. At seven."

"Very well," said the doctor, "seven be it. Do me good, too, perhaps," he muttered, as he went away. "Better for him to marry her. Yes, I can turn him round my finger."

He went home musing deeply, and, punctual to time, joined Glyddyr at the hotel, to find him looking flushed and excited.

"Hallo! That's not the tonic," he said.

"Eh! Tonic? No, it's the weather. Storm always affects me a little. I was obliged to have a pint of champagne to pull me up."

The doctor laughed as he shook his head, for he saw in the half-wrecked man before him, a life annuity, if the cards were rightly played, and during the dinner he once or twice told himself that his game was to hurry on the engagement between Claude and Glyddyr.

"If he is wise," the doctor said to himself, "Glyddyr will play the trump card. It would take the trick. Your father's wish, my dear. Poor old gentleman."

They parted almost sworn friends, for the real cards had been kindly to both, and neither had lost or won.

"It's rather rough for going on board to-night," said the doctor.

"Pish! Not a bit. I'm not afraid of a few waves."

"Well, don't get drowned."

"Those who are bound to be hanged will never be drowned," came into Glyddyr's head as the doctor departed, and the old saw sent quite a chill through him.

"Confound it. What a coward I am," he muttered angrily. "I felt so much better all the evening. Here," he said roughly to the waiter, who had come in accidentally, as waiters do when the guests begin to stir. "My bill."

That document was quite ready; and after glancing at it, Glyddyr took a bank-note from his pocket-book, and laid it upon the tray.

The waiter bowed, went out, and returned with the note, crossed to a side table where there was a blotting case and inkstand, both of which he brought to where Glyddyr was smoking.

"What's the matter? Not a bad one, is it?"

"Oh dear no, sir," said the waiter, with a deprecatory cough, "only master said would you mind putting your name on the back?"

"D— your master," cried Glyddyr, snatching the pen and scribbling down his name. "There: you ought to know me by this time."

"Yes, sir; of course, sir; but we always do that with notes, sir."

"Get out, and bring me my change."

"Yes, sir; directly sir."

"It was your father's wish, Claude—your father's latest wish. You will not refuse me. I can wait."

Glyddyr was muttering this as the waiter brought his change, and the words kept on running in his head as he walked down to the pier, to find his men waiting for him. The words haunted him, too, as he rode over the rough waves in the little harbour.

"Bah!" he thought, as he reached his cabin and threw himself down, flushed and in high spirits now, "it was an accident, and I am a fool to shrink with a prize like that waiting

for me. I will go on, and she can't refuse me if I only have plenty of pluck. I've been a bit out of order, and weak. It's all right now. That cad hasn't a chance. My wife before six months are gone, and then, Master Gellow, if I don't send you to the right about I'll—"

He stopped, for he remembered Denise.

"No," he muttered uneasily, "one's obliged to keep a cad to do one's dirty work, and Gellow can be useful when he likes."

CHAPTER VIII.

MRS SARSON'S APPEAL.

"SIT down, Mr Wimble, and how's all Danmouth? I was coming over in a day or two perhaps, to stay at the Fort, and if I do, I dare say I shall have to make a call on you."

"Glad to see you at any time, sir," said Wimble, looking uneasily at the portly figure of the lawyer as he sat back in his chair, after a long study over Gartram's papers."

For, in spite of Claude's decision, that missing sum of money troubled Trevithick.

"It's a reflection on me, as his business man," he said to himself. "Forty thousand in notes gone and nobody knows where. I'll trace that money. I shall not rest till I do."

He had some thought, too, that if he did triumphantly trace that missing sum, Claude would be pleased, and Mary Dillon more than satisfied. So he worked on in secret, and he

was busy when his clerk announced the Danmouth barber.

“And now, what can I do for you?” said Trevithick.

The barber hesitated, looked round, and then back at the calm, thoughtful man before him.

“You need not be afraid to speak, Mr Wimble,” said Trevithick looking very serious but feeling amused, “no one can hear.”

“Sure, sir?”

“Quite.”

“Because it’s horribly private, sir.”

“Indeed! What is it? Want to borrow a little cash?”

“Me, sir?” cried the barber jumping up indignantly. “No, sir; I’ve got my little bit saved up and safely invested at five per cent.”

“I beg your pardon, and congratulate you. Then what is it?”

Wimble went on tiptoe to the entrance, opened the door, peeped out, and, after closing it, came stealthily back close to the table, upon which he rested his hand, bent forward till his face came within a foot of the lawyer’s, and gazed at him wildly.

"Well, Mr Wimble, what is it?" said Trevithick at last, for his visitor was silent.

"It's murder, sir," whispered the barber.

"What?"

"Murder, sir."

"Well, then, you had better go to the police, man, for that's not in my way."

"If you'll excuse me, sir, it is. You are Mr Gartram's lawyer, and have to do with his affairs."

"Good heavens, man, what do you mean?"

"That Mr Gartram was murdered, sir—poisoned, and I've got the clue."

"What?"

"I thought I wouldn't say a word, sir. That it was too horrible, and that no matter what one did, it wouldn't bring the poor man back to life; but when I see the murderer going on in his wickedness, spending the money he must have stolen, and pretending he has come in for a fortune, and on the strength of it trying to delude weak widows he lodges with, and carrying on with other ladies too,

it is time to speak. The human heart won't hold such secrets without a busting out."

The lawyer started at the sound of the word *money*, for it seemed to strike a chord within his own breast.

"Look here, Mr Wimble," he said; "do I gather aright that you think that Mr Gartram was murdered?"

"Poisoned, sir."

"Good heavens! But by whom?"

"One who had sworn to have revenge upon him—one who wanted his money; and who was seen and caught lurking about the Fort, sir, one dark night, waiting for his opportunity, for he knew the place well from a boy."

"Great heavens, man, whom do you mean?"

"The man who has blighted my life, sir, Mr Christopher Lisle."

"Rubbish!"

"What, sir?"

"You're mad."

"I wish I was, sir, and that I could say to myself you're fancying all this; I should be a happier man, sir. But I can't. I've fought with it and smothered it down, but it's one

living fire, sir, and it's kept burning the day through."

"Mr Christopher Lisle?"

"Yes, sir. Him as was turned away, and heard to say threatening things against poor Mr Gartram."

"But found on the premises?"

"Yes, sir; the night Mr Gartram died of poison, no matter what the doctors said; and that night the deed was done this bottle of stuff was thrown out of the window down among the rocks and sand."

"How do you know?"

"Because I found it early next morning," said Wimble, holding up the bottle; "and I can swear it was not there the day before."

"Nonsense, nonsense, man! It's impossible."

"That's what I said to myself, sir, but nature argued it out inside me. 'Here's Mr Chris Lisle,' it said, 'wanted Miss Claude, and her father refused him, and was going to give her to Mr Glyddyr, of the yacht. There's one reason. Mr Chris was thrown over, because he was poor. That's another reason. Mr

Chris is rich now. How did he become rich? Nobody knows. Mr Chris was found in the garden, hiding, on the night Mr Gartram died, and the window was open.—What do you say to that? This bottle, with some poison in it, was found under the window by me.”

“Let me look.”

“No, sir. That bottle’s mine now. I wouldn’t part with it for a hundred pounds.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s a curiosity, sir, as thousands would come to see. That bottle killed a man.”

“Let me look. I’ll give it you back.”

“Honour bright, sir?”

“Yes.”

Wimble unrolled the bottle from its cover and handed it to the lawyer, who took and examined it.

“Pish!” he said, looking at the limpid fluid within. “Water.”

“I was told it was chloral, sir.”

“Chloral?” cried Trevithick; “he died of an overdose of chloral.”

"Of course he did, sir," said, the barber triumphantly. "Now, sir, am I mad?"

Trevithick rose, and walked heavily up and down the room, like a small elephant seeking to quit its enclosure, but professional training came to his aid directly, and he reseated himself, looking quite calm.

"This is a terribly serious thing, Mr Wimble," he said sternly. "You are charging Mr Lisle with murder."

"Terribly serious thing to take Mr Gart-ram's life, sir."

"If he did, my man—if he did. But it must be all a mistake."

"I hope it is, sir, indeed."

"If the police knew of this, it would be awkward for Mr Lisle."

"Of course it would, sir."

"But, my good man, you are taking the view that he is guilty. I tell you that it is impossible."

"I hope it is, sir; but I've gone over it in my bed till I'm obliged to believe Mr Lisle did it; and I feel I couldn't keep the secret any longer."

“And so you came to me?”

“Yes, sir, as Mr Gartram’s business man.”

“Dear, dear—dear, dear!” ejaculated Trevithick excitedly, as the man began to overcome the lawyer. “There are the ladies, Wimble. We must be very careful. If this reached their ears it would be horrible.”

“Yes, sir, of course; but the wicked ought to be punished.”

“You don’t like Mr Lisle?” said the lawyer, looking at him searchingly.

“Well, sir, if I must speak out, no: I don’t like Mr Lisle.”

“And so you magnify this suspicion, and seek to do him harm by setting about the story.”

“Steady there, sir, please. I don’t set about a story without good proof. Now, let me ask you, sir, was Mr Gartram the sort of man to go and kill himself with an overdose of that stuff?”

“By accident, man; yes.”

“Not a bit of it, sir. He was too clever. I don’t want to prove Mr Lisle guilty, but

there's the case. He was hanging about the grounds that night."

"Who saw him?"

"The gardener, sir, Brime. Caught him there after he had been forbidden the place, and he persuaded the man to hold his tongue."

"Look here, Wimble," said Trevithick, sternly, "there may be a slight substratum of probability in what you say, but it is most unlikely that this young man can have committed such a crime. Now, then, I'll tell you what it is your duty to do."

"Yes, sir," said Wimble eagerly.

"Go back to Danmouth, and keep your own counsel for the present. You can do that?"

"Hold my tongue, sir? Of course."

"Don't mention this to a soul."

"And hush it up, sir—a murder?"

"Pish! It is no murder. Let the matter rest while I try to make out whether there is anything in what you say."

"Ah, you'll find it right, sir. Young men like Mr Chris don't get rich in a day."

“Never mind about that. I’ll go into the matter quietly. Recollect that it would be your ruin if it was known that you had, without foundation, made this horrible charge against Mr Lisle.”

“My ruin, sir?”

“Of course. You could not stay in the town afterwards. There, go back and hold your tongue. I’m coming over to Danmouth to-morrow, and after I have carefully weighed all you have said, I will see you again.”

“Come in and see me to-morrow, sir. You can easily do that, sir. Nobody would think it meant anything more than coming in to be shaved.”

“Well, I’ll call; and now, mind this: not a soul in the place must hear a word. It is our secret, Wimble.”

“Yes, sir, I see,” said the barber. “You may trust me. I came straight to you, sir. Oh, I can be as close and secret as grim death, sir, you’ll see.”

“That’s right, my man. And take my advice, don’t think any more of it. I confess that it looks bad, but we shall find out that it

is all imagination, and I hope it is, for every one's sake. Close, Mr Wimble, perfectly close, mind, at all events for the present."

"Trust me, sir. I'm glad I came to you, and you shall find me close as a box."

Wimble spoke in all sincerity, and he returned to Danmouth, feeling glad that he had seen the lawyer; but when he spoke he did not realise that there was a key that would open that box.

He had no necessity for going round by Mrs Sarson's cottage, it was quite out of his way, but it was in the dusk of evening, when love will assert itself even in middle-aged minds.

"All alone there at the mercy of a murderer," thought Wimble. "I'll just walk by and see if she is quite safe."

It was rather a hopeless thing to do, he owned, for there was not likely to be anything in the outside walls to indicate whether the widow was safe or no. All the same, he went round that way to find that all looked right; but as he passed very slowly by, he found that the window of Chris's room was open, and he

stopped short as if spellbound, for a familiar voice said, in tones which indicated that the speaker was shedding tears,—

“No, no, my dear; you can’t think how much I think about you.”

The voice ceased as Wimble gave a very decided knock at the door.

Mrs Sarson came to answer it slowly, for she was wiping her eyes after a long, long talk with Chris, whom in a motherly way she had been trying to rouse from the reckless, despondent state into which he had fallen, and tried in vain.

Consequently there was a wet gleam on her cheeks, as, candle in hand, she answered the door.

“You, Mr Wimble!” she said, starting, and feeling a little confused. “So bold of him to come and call,” she thought.

“Yes, Mrs Sarson, I want to speak to you particularly.”

“Not to-night, Mr Wimble. I—I am not quite well.”

“Yes; to-night.”

“But Mr Lisle is at home.”

“ Yes, I know,” he said, with a dark look in his eyes ; and—fluttered and trembling before the strange, stern manner of her visitor—she drew back, allowed him to enter, closed the door, and led the way to the snug back room—half kitchen, half parlour—and then looked at him wonderingly, her heart fluttering more and more as she saw his wild look, and that he carefully closed the door.

“ Goodness me, Mr Wimble, what is the matter ? ” she said faintly.

“ Everything,” he cried, making a snatch at her wrist, and holding it tightly. “ Woman, you know how for years I have had hopes.”

“ Well, Mr Wimble, you made me think so ; but it’s quite impossible, I assure you. Neighbours, but nothing more.”

“ Why, woman, why ? ” he said, in a whisper.

“ Because—because I am quite happy and contented as I am, Mr Wimble, with my little bit of an income and my lodger.”

“ Yes,” cried Wimble, with a laugh, “ that’s it. Ah, woman, woman, that you could throw yourself away upon a creature like that ? ”

“Mr Wimble, what do you mean?”

“Knowing how I worshipped you, for you to consort with a vile creature, who cheats and abuses your confidence—a villain too bad to be allowed to live—a man whom the law will seize before long.”

“Mr Wimble, are you mad?”

“Yes, madam, with shame and horror, to think what must come when you find out that this serpent who has wound himself about you is a convict, a murderer, who stops at nothing.”

“Mr Wimble, whom do you mean?”

“Mean? who should I mean,” he cried tragically, “but that wretch in yonder room?”

“A murderer!”

“Yes, of the man who drove him from his home. I denounce him as the murderer of poor old Gartram, and—”

There was a wild shriek, and as Chris Lisle rushed into the room to see what was wrong, Wimble remembered his promise to the lawyer; but too late: the box was wide open now.

“Mrs Sarson—Wimble! what is the matter?”

“Oh, Mr Lisle,” cried the widow, sobbing

wildly. "Oh, my poor darling, he says you murdered Mr Gartram. Tell him he is mad."

Sarah Woodham was seated an hour later that night sewing, when she was startled by the sudden entrance of Reuben, the gardener, looking wild-eyed and strange, and she involuntarily rose from her chair, and stood upon the defensive, the other servants being down the town, and her heart telling her that "this foolish man," as she termed him, was about to renew advances which he had been making before.

"Don't be frightened," he said, quickly grasping the meaning of her action; "I wasn't going to say anything about that now. Have you heard?"

"Heard what?" .

"I've just come from the harbour, and they're all talking about it."

"Yes? What—some wreck?"

"No; about Mr Chris Lisle."

"What about him—dead?" said Sarah Woodham, in a hoarse whisper, as she laid her hand upon her side and thought of Claude.

"Better if he was, my dear," said the gardener hoarsely, and in her excitement the woman did not think to resent his familiarity. "They are saying that he murdered master with poison."

Sarah reeled, and would have fallen, so great was the shock the words gave her, but Brime caught her in his arms.

She recovered herself, and thrust him away.

"Mr Chris Lisle? Impossible."

"So I thought, but he was skulking about our grounds that night, for I caught him hiding."

"Oh, it can't be true. You people are always inventing foolish scandals. What nonsense! Let him rest in his grave in peace."

She looked so ghastly that even the unobservant gardener noticed it, and made a remark.

"Look white? of course," she said, with a curious laugh. "Any woman would turn pale on hearing such talk as that. There, go away."

"You needn't be cross with me, Sarah Woodham," said Brime, paying no heed to her last words, and only too glad of an excuse to hold her in conversation. "I knew

how you liked Miss Claude, and the news was about her young man, and I thought it better to tell you than go and tell her."

"What! you would not dare to tell her such a thing."

"Well, somebody will if I don't. She's sure to know."

"Hush, man! Don't dare to speak of it again. It is a miserable scandal of some of the tattling gossips, and it will be forgotten, perhaps, to-morrow. There, not another word."

"But, Sarah, let me talk of something else."

She went to the door and opened it, pointing out.

"Go," she said.

Brime sighed deeply, and went away slowly without another word.

"Poor fellow," said the woman softly, "better for him to jump into the sea than to go on thinking about that."

She stood for a few moments with her hands to her forehead, as if to dull the excitement from which she was suffering, uttering a low moan from time to time.

“How horrible!” she gasped. “It seems more than I can bear. Poor child, if she was to hear!”

She stood staring before her at last, with her lips moving, and her eyes fixed upon the darkness in the farther corner of the room, as if she saw something there.

“I cannot bear it,” she muttered at last; and hurriedly passing out, she hurried up to her room, and threw herself upon her knees by the bedside.

How long she remained there she did not know. Suddenly she started up, believing that she heard voices below.

“They will have heard it, perhaps,” she said excitedly; and, hurrying out, she found that the two servants who had been out had returned, and were talking quickly.

Sarah Woodham turned cold with apprehension, under the impression that the women were retailing the scandal they had heard to their mistress, and she uttered a sigh of relief as she heard Mary Dillon say quickly,—

“And they are talking about it everywhere, you say?”

“ Yes, miss ; and we thought you ought to hear.”

“ Hush !—Oh, Woodham, these two have come back with a silly tale that—”

Sarah Woodham laid a thin hand upon her arm.

“ That—have you heard ? Oh, how horrible ! But what absurd nonsense. There, go away, all of you. It is too dreadful to talk about, and you must let it die a natural death.”

“ But they say, miss, that the police will take Mr Christopher Lisle, and that he will be hung for murder,” whispered the cook in awe-stricken tones ; “ and if Miss Claude should hear that— Oh !”

Claude had quietly opened the drawing-room door and stepped out into the hall, coming in search of her cousin, the low whispering without having attracted her attention.

“ You heard what I said,” cried Mary, quickly. “ Why don’t you go ?”

“ Stop !” said Claude, in a strangely altered voice.

“ No, no, Claude, dear,” said Mary, crossing

to her. "It is nothing you need listen to. Only a wretched tattling from down on the beach."

"I know what they said," replied Claude, hoarsely. "Sarah Woodham, have you heard this—this dreadful charge?"

The woman did not answer with her lips, but her dark eyes were fixed wildly on those of her mistress.

"Then it is true!"

"Claude, dear; pray come," whispered Mary, clinging to her; but she was thrust away.

"I will know everything," she cried, excitedly. "You, Sarah Woodham, speak out, and tell me all the truth."

"No—no," whispered the woman, and she stood trembling as if with ague.

"I will know," said Claude, catching her up by the arm. "I heard what was said—that Mr Lisle was charged with murder. It could not be."

"No, no, Claude, of course not."

"Silence, Mary! Speak, woman, or must I go down to the beach and ask there. Tell

me. It was a quarrel ; they met and fought. Is Mr Glyddyr dead ? ”

They gazed at her wonderingly—stricken for the moment—the silence being broken by the two servants exclaiming in a breath,—

“ No, no, miss. It was master they said he killed.”

“ What ? ”

“ Come away, Claude,” whispered Mary, who was white and trembling. “ It is a horrible invention. There is no truth in it. Come back into the drawing-room, and I’ll tell you quietly, dear, what I have heard.”

“ Go on,” said Claude, fixing the two women with her eyes as she held her cousin’s arm and half forced her back. “ Tell me everything you have heard.”

Between them, trembling the while before the wild eyes which seemed to force them to speak, the women related confusedly the report they had heard, one which had grown rapidly as is the custom with such news ; and out of the tangle, as Sarah Woodham and Mary both strangely moved, stood speechless and silent, Claude learned the charge which

had arisen against the man she loved, to the bitter end, struggling the while to make indignant denial of that at which her soul felt to revolt. But no words would come. Her reason, her soul, both cried out aloud within her that this was an utter impossibility, but the rumours mastered them with a terrible array of facts, till she was forced to believe that, stung to madness by the treatment he had received, and hurried on by a lust for gold, Chris, her old playmate and brother as a child, the man at last she had grown to love, had been tempted to commit this deed.

“It is not true—it is not true,” something within her kept on saying as she gazed wildly from one to the other, seeing the gap—the black gap—already existing between her and her lover, widening into an awful, impassable chasm, in which were buried her life’s hopes and happiness for ever.

CHAPTER IX.

A DEBATE.

GLYDDYR had undoubtedly gone backward in health with rapid strides since he and the Doctor had last met, not many hours before. His face was of a sickly yellow; there were dark marks under his eyes, and his hands trembled as he weakly arranged the flower in his button-hole, and played with his blue serge yachting cap.

“How terrible!” he murmured at last.
“Poor girl! What a shock!”

“Yes; enough to give her brain fever,” said the Doctor, speaking quickly. “The wretched, cackling fools.”

“Terrible! terrible!” muttered Glyddyr. Then, after a pause, as he took a turn up and down the Doctor’s little surgery, as if it were his own cabin, he passed his tongue over his

dry lips, and turned quickly to the Doctor, who was watching him curiously. "Here, I say: I'm completely knocked over. For heaven's sake give me a dose."

"Yes, of course."

"No, no, not that cursed stuff," cried Glyddyr, as he saw the Doctor's hand raised toward the ammonia bottle. "Brandy—whisky, for goodness' sake!"

Asher gave him a quick look, then took his key, and, opening a cellaret, poured a goodly dram of brandy into a glass, and placed it on the table.

"There's water in that bottle," he said.

Glyddyr made an impatient gesture, and tossed off the raw spirit.

"Hah!" he cried, setting down the glass, "I can talk now. What—what do you think of this report?"

"Oh, all madness, of course," cried the Doctor hastily.

"Yes—yes—all madness, of course," said Glyddyr, letting himself sink down in a chair. "All madness, of course. He couldn't, could he?"

The two men gazed in each other's eyes, and there was silence for quite a long space.

"But they found that bottle," continued Glyddyr, as if speaking to himself. "Ugly piece of evidence, isn't it?"

"Oh, but that proves nothing," said Asher.

"And he being found in the garden that night, when Gartram was having his after-dinner nap," continued Glyddyr, looking at the door.

"Yes, looks bad," said the Doctor, "but all nonsense. Why can't they let the old man rest?"

"You—you don't think he poisoned him?" said Glyddyr.

"No, certainly not."

"It would have been impossible, of course. But they say he is rich now; has plenty of money. How could he come by that?"

"Who can say?"

"Yes; and a large sum was missing—a very large sum."

"That is the worst argument yet," said the doctor. "But, pooh, pooh, my dear sir, the old man died from an over-dose of chloral.

My colleague and I were satisfied about that. There, don't look so white."

"Do I look white?" said Glyddyr, picking up the glass he had used and draining the last drops. "Oh, I feel much better now. But, Doctor, what do you think of it all? They'll arrest that young man, I suppose. It would be very horrible if he were to be tried and condemned to death."

"Horrible!"

"Do you think he will be taken?"

"No."

"I'm—I'm glad of that," faltered Glyddyr, with his trembling hands playing about his watch chain. "So horrible. He was a friend, you see, of Miss Gartram's. Of course, with such a charge as that against him, he could never speak to her again."

"Look here, Glyddyr," said the Doctor, "you and I may as well understand each other."

"What do you mean?" cried Glyddyr, sinking back in his chair.

"That we have somehow become friends, and we may as well continue so. You mean to marry Claude Gartram?"

“Yes, yes, of course,” assented Glyddyr drawing a long hoarse breath.

“And, I’m sure, you feel all this very deeply. Terrible shock for the poor girl.”

“Yes, terrible,” whispered Glyddyr.

“I don’t wonder that you are so completely prostrated this morning.”

“No; it is no wonder, is it?”

“Not the slightest.”

“And I feel it, too, about young Lisle. I—I shouldn’t like him to be hung.”

“Make yourself easy, man; he will not be. There will be nine days’ talk about it, and that is all. The old man was examined; our evidence was taken, and he is at rest in his grave. The law can’t take any notice of these scandals.”

“Do—do you feel that—it will not take him and imprison him for life, say.”

“No, man, it will not; but as far as he is concerned with Claude Gartram, it will be just as if he had been put out of the way. Last night’s reports will be the making of you.”

“What do you mean?”

“You know. Claude had a lingering liking for that fellow, but she can never speak to

him again ; and if you play your cards right, her pretty little hand will some day be laid in yours. You'll give her a new name, and take possession yonder."

Glyddyr looked at him rather wildly.

"Why, you don't seem glad, man. Hallo !"

There was a sharp knock just then, and the two occupants of the surgery listened intently to the opening, and the low murmuring of voices.

The servant tapped on the surgery door directly after.

"Mr Trevithick, sir, would be glad to speak to you."

"Show him in," said the Doctor. "No, don't go, Glyddyr. He has come over about that rumour."

The lawyer entered, and shook hands with both.

"Did not want to interrupt you, Doctor ; but I should like a few minutes' conversation."

"About that rumour concerning Gartram ? By all means. Mr Glyddyr and I were discussing the matter."

"Well, what is your opinion ?"

“That it is all nonsense.”

“You have heard everything; the report of the money, the finding of a bottle, and Mr Lisle being seen that night in the grounds?”

“Yes—oh, yes; but what does all that prove?” said the Doctor decisively. “We were quite satisfied how Gartram met with his end. Let the rumour blow over, as it will do, and let the old man rest.”

The lawyer sat looking very thoughtful for a few moments, as he ran over in his mind all that had passed.

“By the way, how did you hear of it?”

“I am not at liberty to say.”

“Then I’ll tell you,” said Asher quickly. “That crazy barber came over to you yesterday. He found a bottle, and showed it to me. Bah! all rubbish. The man’s half mad.”

“I am beginning to think you are right,” said Trevithick.

“I’m sure I am.”

“But it is a bad thing for Mr Christopher Lisle to have such a charge made against him, especially after being on such friendly terms with the family.”

“Well, gentlemen, you must excuse me; I am going up to the house,” cried the Doctor.

“I will walk with you,” said Trevithick quietly.

“And I am to be left out in the cold,” muttered Glyddyr, as he followed them slowly out, only to stop hesitating, as he caught sight of the principal object of his thoughts.

“That don’t look like guilt, Mr Trevithick,” said Asher, who had seen Chris before Glyddyr had caught sight of him.

“Might be clever cunning,” said the lawyer quietly.

“Might be, but it is not. Oh, hang it all, sir, don’t let us harbour the thought for a moment. The young man’s as innocent as you are. Good-morning, Mr Lisle.”

“Ah, glad to see you, Doctor,” cried Chris, whose face looked drawn and old. “Morning, Mr Trevithick. You have heard the rumour?”

The Doctor bowed his head.

“I will not stoop to deny it, of course. The insensate fools! As if it were possible,” he cried excitedly.

“Of course no one believes such an absurd rumour—I mean no one with brains—eh, Mr Trevithick?” said Asher.

The lawyer coughed, and the pair moved on.

Chris was left standing by himself as the Doctor and lawyer went on up to the house. He stood gazing after them for a time, and then turned to go all alone towards the beach. At that moment he became aware of the fact that Glyddyr was watching him, and the feeling of love and sympathy for Claude, and the desire to clear himself in her eyes, turned to bitterness and jealousy.

“Of course,” he said savagely; “ready to believe ill of me! Ah, how I could enjoy half-an-hour with you, Parry Glyddyr, alone!”

He walked on, to become conscious directly of that which, in his excitement, he had not before observed.

There were not many people visible, but those who were hanging about in knots were evidently talking about and watching him; and as he passed on toward his home, he found that men who had known from boy-

hood suddenly turned away to enter their houses, or begin talking earnestly to their companions. Not one gave him look or word of recognition.

"Has it come to this?" he said, savagely. "A pariah—a leper to be avoided. Well, let them. Oh! you!" he muttered, as a great stout fisherman, whose boat he had used scores of times, passed him with his hands deep down in his pockets, staring straight out over his left shoulder to sea.

Chris's fists involuntarily clenched, and he strode away, not once looking back or he would have seen heads thrust out of doors, and knots gathering together to discuss his case, and the burden of all the converse was: "How soon will he be took and put in gaol?"

"Hah! my dear," ejaculated Mrs Sarson, as he reached his lodgings. "You've got safely back. Mr Wimble came by just now, and though I wouldn't listen to him, he said the police were going to take you over to Toxeter and lock you up for committing murder."

"They will if that man don't mind, Mrs Sarson," cried Chris, as he hurried into his room. "Curse him! I feel as if I could go at once, get hold of him, and wring his neck."

"Mr Christopher!" cried the poor woman, bursting into a fit of sobbing; "don't—don't do anything rash."

"Look here, old lady," he cried, catching her by the arm; "you are not going to join this wretched crew, are you, and to believe I could be such a wretch?"

"Oh, no, my dear! Oh, no."

"That's right. But think twice. If you have the least thought of the kind, I'll go at once."

"Indeed, no, my dear," she sobbed; "and even if you had done it, I couldn't be such a cruel wretch as to tell against you, for you must have been mad."

"Hang it, woman! if you talk like that, you'll make me mad."

"I've done, my dear. There, I won't say another word, only to defend you. But tell me, my dear, what are you going to do?"

“What an honest man should do, Mrs Sarson,” said Chris, excitedly. “Mind I’m not wild with you, only with the wretched fools out yonder,” he said more gently, as he took his landlady’s hands. “There, my good old soul, it’ll all come right some day, here or hereafter.”

“But you’ll go and tell the magistrate, won’t you, that it’s all false?”

“No,” said Chris, sternly, and with his face growing hard and old. “I’m not going to deny anything. I’m an Englishman, Mrs Sarson, a strong-willed, stubborn Englishman, let them say what they like — do what they like, I’m here, and here I stay till they drag me away, and I do not care whether they do or do not now.”

“But one thing, my dear, one word, and I won’t ask you another question. Were you at the Fort that night, and did Reuben Brime find you?”

“Yes, Mrs Sarson.”

“Oh! — But why were you there, my dear, like that?”

“You asked one question, but I’ll answer

the other. Because I am a weak young fool—in love with somebody who seemed to have cared little for me, and I wanted to get one word with her. Yes, I was a weak young fool. That seems years ago now,” he continued, half-talking to himself, “and I seem to have grown much older. Old enough to be firm and strong.”

“But you didn’t tell me, my dear, what you mean to do.”

“Mean to do?” cried Chris, with a bitter laugh. “I’m going to live it down.”

CHAPTER X.

COMING BACK ON FRIDAY.

CHRIS found it a harder task than he had anticipated. "Give a dog a bad name, and then hang him," says the old saw; and in his case Chris used to say bitterly to himself that he might as well have been hung out of his misery.

For Wimble's shop had always been the fertile manure heap from which, fungus-like, scandals sprung, and their spores were carried away in all directions, to start into growth again and again in all directions. Often enough one scandal would grow, flourish, and then seem to die right away, but that was only the belief of the parties concerned. Just as they were hugging themselves upon the fact there had been a nine days' wonder, and it had come to an end, a little round toadstool-like head would spring up in quite a different

direction, and grow, and seed and spread itself more strongly than ever.

Even minor scandals died hard, if they died at all, in Danmouth ; but, for the most part, they proved evergreen, and lived on long after the authors had been gathered to their fathers and forgotten.

This being the case with the lesser, it was not likely that one of the greatest ever known should drop away ; and though weeks and months glided on, the story of the bottle found under the library window of the Fort was as fresh as ever, and people, after an easy shave, would ask quietly to see it, to have it taken with great show of secrecy from the drawer where it reposed, shaken so as to form globules of solution of chloral, and, if favoured customers, the cork might be removed and the contents smelt.

Wimble was quite right. That bottle proved to be the finest curiosity he possessed, and bade fair to become worth quite a hundred pounds to him, if not more.

As time went on, the ingenious idea occurred to him that it would be advisable to

add to its attractions by giving the contents a perceptible odour, and this he did by introducing one single drop of patchouli, a scent not familiar to the lower orders of the little fishing port, and whose inhalation was thoroughly enjoyed by many a gaping idiot, who shook his Solon-like head, and said "Hah!" softly and mysteriously, before handing back the bottle and whispering, "'Nuff to kill any man."

The treasure might have had additional piquancy if Chris Lisle had been tried for murder and hanged; but as he was not, Wimble said he must make the best of things, and went on profiting by his possession; but as he felt that his declaration to the widow that night had not advanced his suit, he spent his spare time watching her house, and wondering how long it would be ere Chris Lisle realised the fact that, as public opinion let him exist, it was his duty to live somewhere else.

But Chris was as stubborn as public opinion, and, regardless of side-long glances, and the fact that he was regularly avoided,

he went on just as of old, apparently living his old life, and waging war upon the salmon, trout, and fish that visited the mouth of the river; but they had an easy time.

Claude had left Danmouth, but she made no sign before she went away, and Chris was too stubbornly proud to make any advance.

“If she believes so ill of me, she may,” he used to say to himself. “A woman who can love like that is not worth a second thought from any man.”

He used to say that often, and tell himself that he could never tire. He could live it all down, and that some day he would enjoy a keen revenge on those who had doubted him. He was happy enough, he said, and the fools might think what they liked so long as they did not molest him.

The little mob of Danmouth had gone near this though once, when, soon after the news was spread, they found that no steps were taken to bring the crime home to the murderer. For Trevithick, though terribly exercised in spirit about that missing sum of money, felt himself bound to agree with the

Doctor that no steps could be taken, and consequently Gartram was left in peace beneath the handsome granite obelisk cut from his own quarry.

So the wrath of those who would have liked to take the law in their own hands cooled down, and their enmity found its vent in scowls and avoidance, at which Chris laughed scornfully, or resented with looks as fierce in public; but there was a hard set of lines growing more marked about the corners of his mouth and his eyes, and there were times when he broke down in secret far up the glen, and told himself that life was not worth living. He would be better dead.

Claude went to recover her strength in the south of France, and Sarah Woodham was left in charge of the house, about which Reuben Brime sighed as he mowed the grass, and groaned as he drove in his spade; but Sarah did not heed, and he too used to think to himself that he might as well put out his pipe some night by taking a plunge off the end of the pier.

Glyddyr stayed on in the harbour till the

day after Claude and Mary left, when the yacht glided slowly out, and Chris watched it till it disappeared beyond one of the headlands far away; and then the time seemed like years as he went on setting public opinion at defiance, wrestling with it still.

There were those in the place who would have met him on friendly terms, notably Asher; but Chris met all advances curtly, and went his way.

"They shall not tolerate me," he said bitterly. "I will live in the full sunshine. Till I do, I can be content with the shade."

There was one, though, whom he encountered from time to time when wandering listlessly whipping the streams, not very often, but on the rare occasions when she sought some solitary spot far away out on the rocky moorland to dream over the past.

The first time they met, Chris's heart bounded, and his eyes flashed as he was about to speak.

"No," he said, checking himself; "I shall not stoop. The advance shall come from her."

A month passed, and again on a cold, windy day of winter he was aware of a dark-looking, thickly-wrapped figure going along the track, and his heart whispered to him, "You have only to go back a few dozen yards to speak to her, and hear the news for which, in spite of all you say, you are hungering."

Chris nearly yielded, but the will was too stubborn yet, and he stood firm.

Then came a day in spring when the promise of the coming time of beauty was being given by swelling bud, green arum, and the tender blades of grass which peeped from among last year's drab dry strands. It had been a cruel, stormy time for weeks, cruelly stormy, too, in Chris's heart, for the load was more heavy than ever, and the young man's heart was very sore.

He was going up the glen near where he had first told Claude of his love, and the time of year seemed to bring with it hope and a longing for human intercourse and sympathy ; and though he would not own it, he would have given anything for news of the one who filled his thoughts.

She came upon him suddenly this time, and they were within half-a-dozen yards of each other before either was aware of the other's presence.

"Ah, Sarah Woodham!" he said; and she stopped short to stand looking at him, with her fierce dark eyes softening, and the vestige of a smile about her thin parched lips. "Well," he continued carelessly, though his heart beat fast, "hadn't you better go on? You'll lose caste if any one sees you talking to me."

"Mr Lisle," she said reproachfully.

"Well, am I not a murderer?"

"Oh!"

The woman shuddered, and looked at him wildly.

"Mr Lisle! Don't talk like that!"

"Why not?"

"No one worth notice could think such a thing of you."

"Not even your mistress!" he said, with boyish irritability; but only to feel as if he would have given all he possessed to recall it.

"Don't say cruel things about her, sir. She has suffered deeply."

"Yes, but—"

He checked himself, and though Sarah Woodham remained silent and waiting, he did not speak.

"What changes and troubles we have seen, sir, since the happy old days when, quite a boy then, you used to come to the quarry with Miss Claude."

"Bah! You never seemed to be very happy, Sarah. You were much brighter and happier before you were married."

The woman glanced at him sharply, and then her eyes grew dreamy and thoughtful again.

"Woodham was a good, kind husband to me, sir," she said gently.

"Yes; but see what a cold, stern, hard life you lived. He—"

"Hush, sir, please," said the woman gently; "he was a good, true man to me, and we all misjudge at times."

"Is that meant for a cut at me, Sarah?" said Chris cynically.

"Yes, sir," said the woman naïvely. "I don't think you ought to be one to cast a stone—at the dead."

He turned upon her angrily, but she met his sharp look with one so grave and calm that it disarmed him, and, led on by the fact that he had hardly spoken to a soul for weeks, he said,—

"Few people have such cause to be bitter as I have."

"We all think our fate the hardest, sir."

"Going to preach at me, Sarah?"

"No, sir," she said, with her eyes lighting up, and a pleasant look softening her face; "I only feel grieved and pained to see the bonnie, handsome boy, who I always thought would naturally be my dear Miss Claude's husband, drifting away to wreck like one of the ships we often see."

"Silence, woman!" cried Chris. "For God's sake don't talk like that!"

"I will not, sir, if you tell me not," said Sarah quietly; "but I think you deal hard with poor Miss Claude for what she cannot help."

“What?”

“She has tried to do her duty—that I know.”

“Yes,” he said bitterly; “every one seems to have tried to do his or her duty by me.”

There was a dead silence, during which the woman stood gazing at him wistfully, and more than once her lips moved, and her hand played restlessly about her shawl, as if she wanted to lay it upon his arm, and say something comforting to one who appeared so lonely and cast out.

“Miss Claude is coming home on Friday, sir,” she said at last; and she saw the fervour of hope and joy which beamed from the young man’s eyes—only to be clouded over directly, as he said bitterly,—

“Well, she has a right to. What is it to me?”

“Mr Chris!”

“Oh, don’t talk to me!” he cried passionately. “The world has all gone wrong with me, and I am a cursed and bitter man. God knows that I am, or I could not speak as I do. They’ll find out some day that I am not

a murderer and a thief.—I'm losing time, for the fish are rising fast."

She stood looking after him wistfully as he strode along by the river side, and then walked away with the old dull, agonised look coming back into her face.

"Poor boy!" she said softly. "Poor boy!"

"Coming back on Friday—coming back on Friday!"

Sarah Woodham's words kept repeating themselves in Chris Lisle's ears as he walked on up the glen, waving his fishing-rod so that the line hissed and whistled through the air, and at every repetition of the words his heart bounded, and the young blood ran dancing through his veins.

"Coming back on Friday!"

It was as if new life were rushing through him; his step grew more elastic, his eyes brightened, and he leaped from rock to rock, where the brown water came flashing and foaming down.

"Coming back," he muttered; "coming back."

The past was going to be dead; the clouds

were about to rise from about him, and there was once more going to be something worth living for.

“Bah !” he ejaculated, “I’ve been a morose, bitter, disappointed fool, too ready to give up ; but that’s all past now. She is coming back, and all this time of misery and despair is at an end.”

It seemed to be another man who was hurrying along the margin of the river, in and out over the mighty water-worn stones, with the water rushing between, till he was brought up short by the whizzing sound made by his winch, for the hook had caught in a bush, and his rod was bent half double.

“I can’t fish to-day,” he said, turning back, and winding in till he could give the hook a sharp jerk and snap the gut bottom. “I must go home and think.”

He hurried back, with the feeling growing upon him that all the past trouble was at an end. For the moment he felt intoxicated with the new sense of elation which thrilled him, and it was as if all the young hope and joy which were natural to his age, and had been

clouded now, had suddenly burst forth like so much sunshine. But this was short lived.

As he reached the bridge, a couple of fishermen whom he had known from boyhood were standing with their backs to the parapet, chatting and smoking, but as soon as they saw him approach they turned round, leaned over the side, and began to stare down at the river.

It was like a cold dark mist blown athwart him, but he strode on.

"Fools!" he muttered; and increasing his pace, he began to note more than ever now that his coming was the signal for people standing at their doors to go inside, and for the fishermen to turn their backs.

All this had occurred every time he had been out of late, but he had grown hardened to it, and laughed in his stubborn contempt; but this day, after the fit of elation he had passed through, it all looked new, and he hurried on chilled to the heart; the bright, sunshiny day was clouded over again, and all was once more hopeless and blank.

So bitter was the feeling of despair which now sunk deep into his breast, that he shrank

from Wimble, who was standing at his door in the act of saying good-day to a customer, both looking hard at him till he had entered the cottage.

CHAPTER XI.

UNDER THE CLOUD.

“BETTER go away,” said Chris to himself.

But he stayed, and in contempt of the avoidance of those he met, he was constantly going to and fro during the next twenty-four hours.

Now he was down on the beach, close to the sea ; now wandering high up on the moorland, and seeing, from each point of view, trifles which showed that the mistress of the Fort was coming home.

He called himself “idiot,” and asked mentally where his pride had gone, and determined to shut himself up with his books, but the determination was too weak, and he could not rest. It was something, if only to see the home that would soon again contain the woman who held him fast.

“She will meet me again,” he said, with his hopes rising once more toward the evening of the next day. “I’ll go up boldly like a man.

My darling! And all this misery will be at an end. Nine weary months has she been away, and it has seemed like years. Why didn't I write? Why didn't I crush down all this foolish pride and obstinacy? I ought to have gone to her, instead of letting myself be maddened by that miserable scoundrel, believing she could listen to him, even if it was her father's wish."

He had strolled down the pier and lit a cigar, to stand gazing out to the west, where the sun was setting behind a golden bank of cloud which began to darken with purple as the plainly-marked rays spread out towards the zenith, while the calm sea gently heaved, and began to glow with ruby, topaz and emerald hues.

Far out beyond the shelter of the headland and the long low isle which acted like a break-water to the bay, the sea was ruffled by the gentle evening breeze; and as Chris loitered, with his breast once more growing calm, he could see lugger after lugger, that had been tugged out with the large oars, hoisting sail to catch the soft gale and then glide slowly

away, the tawny sails catching the reflected light, till all around was beautiful as some golden dream.

Chris turned and looked back at the Fort, to see that its windows were aglow, and the cliffs that rose behind and on either side were more lovely than ever.

“What a welcome home for her!” he said softly. “My darling! Oh, if she could see her old home now! if she would only come, and I could be the first to welcome her and take her by the hand.”

“Yes,” he said, as he turned and gazed out to sea and shore, heedless of the fact that a group of sailors were slowly coming down the pier. “I will be there to meet her and take her by the hand. She could not have believed it; and, now that the time of sorrow is at an end, she will—she shall listen to me. Heaven give me strength to master this bitter, cruel pride and foolish jealousy. I will hope.”

“Bet yer a gallon it is,” cried a voice behind him.

“Yah! Yer don’t know what yer talking about. Such gashly stuff!”

“Oh, you’re precious clever, you are. Think that there schooner lay here all those many months and I shouldn’t know her again? Here, let’s go up to the point, and get the coastie to lend us his glass.”

“I don’t want no glass,” said another voice. “My eyes are good enough for that. Jemmy Gadly’s right enough. I could swear to her.”

The speaker made a binocular of his two hands, and gazed out to sea, at where the white sails of a yacht came well into view from beyond the island.

Chris heard every word, but he did not turn. He stood gazing at the yacht, which with every stitch of canvas set, was running fast for the harbour, beautiful in the evening light—a picture in that gleaming sea.

“Ay,” said the man at last, as he dropped his hands and turned to Chris, who was gazing out to sea with a strange singing in his ears, and a sensation at his temples as if the blood was throbbing hard. “Ay, that’s Mr Glyddyr’s yacht, sure enough, and he’s come back o’ course to meet young Miss. Oh, it be you?”

This last as Chris turned round upon him with a ghastly face glaring at him wildly.

“Lor’! Look at that,” cried the man addressed as Gadly, and with an ugly grin overspreading his face as the love of baiting came uppermost. “Come away, Joe; he means mischief. Look out or there’ll be another murder done.”

Thud!

It was as quick as lightning. Chris Lisle’s left fist flashed out, caught the man full in the cheek, and he staggered back, tried to save himself, and then tripped over a rope and fell heavily upon the stones, while his assailant glared round seeking another victim as a low angry murmur rose.

“You coward!” he growled between his teeth.

“Ay, and sarve him gashly well right,” said the sturdy fisherman, who had had his hands up to his eyes, and had addressed Chris. “He is a coward to say that there. Howd off, my lads, and let him bide. There’s been quite enough o’ this gashly jaw. I don’t believe you did kill the old man, Mr Chris, sir, and there’s my hand on it.”

He thrust out his great brown hairy, horny paw, and it was like help held forth to a drowning man. Chris grasped the hand with both of his, and stood gazing full in the rough fellow's eyes, his face working, his breast heaving, and a great struggle going on as he tried to speak, while the little group around looked on at the strange scene.

It was the first kindly word man seemed to have spoken to him all those weary months, and Chris, completely overcome, strove hard to utter his thanks, but for a time nothing would come. At last it was in a low, hoarse murmur that he said,—

“God bless you for that, my man!” and hurried back to his room.

“And you call yourselves mates,” growled the fisherman, who had prudently kept in a reclining position, and who now slowly rose; “and you call yourselves mates. Why, you ought to ha’ chucked him off the wall.”

“And I felt so happy!” groaned Chris; “and I felt so happy!”

“How did he know she was coming back?” he cried suddenly, as he sprang up and caught

a telescope from where it lay upon a row of books, adjusted it, and stood looking out of the open window.

“Yes, it’s his boat; and there he stands using a glass watching her home.”

He shrank away, with his eyes looking dull and sunken as he laid the glass upon the shelf.

“How did he know—how did he know?”

He sank down in a chair, and buried his face in his hands, as a flood of surmises rushed through his brain, every one full of agony, and all pointing to the idea that Claude must have been in communication with Glyddyr, or he never could have timed his return after all these months like that.

Half-an-hour had passed, and then he started from his chair, for there was a loud report.

He sank back in his seat again, with a mocking laugh.

“Beer!” he said bitterly. “Beer! What a world this is!”

And in imagination he saw the white smoke curling up from the mouth of the little cannon which stood by the flagstaff in front of the Harbour Inn, knowing, as he did, that the

piece had been loaded in honour of Glyddyr's return, and fired with the taproom poker, made red for the purpose.

Then there arose a boistrous burst of cheering, taken up again and again, as Glyddyr's gig was rowed up to the steps, and he stepped out upon the pier.

"Yes, cheer away, you idiots," cried Chris, rising from his seat in his jealous agony; "cheer and shout, and go down on the stones and grovel before him."

Bang!

"That's right! Again. Again. Down with you, and let him walk in triumph over your necks. The new man—the new master of the Fort."

"They know it," he groaned, as he dashed to the window, and then backed away, after seeing that he was right, and that Glyddyr was coming along the pier, scattering coins among the little crowd that had gathered round, while the sound of hurrying feet could be heard as men and boys, attracted by the gunfire, were running down to the harbour.

"Yes, they know it. The new lord of the

Fort, and I stand here instead of joining them, and cheering too for the new king of the castle. My God, what a world it is !”

He stopped short, pale and ghastly, as the cheering came nearer, and just then, looking proud and elate, Parry Glyddyr passed the window on his way to the hotel.

“And leave him to triumph over my death !” muttered Chris, in a low fierce voice. “No,” he added, after a pause ; “I’ve been too great a cur as it is. Not yet : it has not come quite to the worst.”

Chris was right. There had been communication between Claude and Glyddyr, and quiet pertinacity, mingled with the greatest show of gentle respect and consideration, had not been without result.

It was only a short run across to Ettreville, and one morning, during a walk with Mary, Glyddyr came up to salute Claude with grave, respectful courtesy.

They had just put in for a few hours, he said, and they sailed again that afternoon. He was so glad to see Miss Gartram again, and he was sure she was better for the change.

Only a few minutes' conversation, and he was gone.

A fortnight later he was there again, and the stay was a little longer; but there was always the same shrinking show of respect for her, and even Mary could say nothing.

And so time wore on, till the coming of the yacht and a stay for at least a few days was no uncommon thing.

"No, I wouldn't say a word," said Gellow, in conference with his man. "Keep quiet, dear boy, till she gets back, even if it's months yet, and then strike home."

"But I'm getting sick of it."

"Never mind, dear boy. It's a very big stake, and I can't understand, seeing what a darling she is, how you shy at her so. No other reason, have you?"

"No, no," said Glyddyr hurriedly.

"But it looks as if you had, even when you say no. But there, it's all right. Give her plenty of time. You have hooked her. If you are hasty now, she'll break away, and never take the fly again. Wait till she goes back into her own quiet little groove. Then

be quite ready; job the landing-net under her with a sure and steady hand, and though she'll kick and struggle a bit, and try to leap back into deep water, the pretty little gold-fish will be yours. And well earned, too."

So Glyddyr waited his time, knew exactly when Claude would return home, and was ready to incite the fishermen and the workers at the quarry to get up a reception in her honour.

This was done, and as Chris Lisle stayed at home, gnawing his lips with agony, he knew that flags and banners were being strung across from house to house, that yachts' guns were to be fired, and that the band from Toxeter was to be there.

It was short time for preparation, but enthusiasm was at high pressure, and the first dawning Chris had of the hour at which Claude would return was given by the band.

For a moment he hesitated. Jealousy said stay, but the old boyish love carried all before it, and, reckless of the lowering looks which greeted him, he hurried along the beach, and made for the Fort, so as to be one of the first to welcome its mistress back.

The bells in the little church began to ring musically, for Glyddyr had well done his work, and then the guns were fired, and as this was supplemented by the distant music, a fierce pang shot through Chris Lisle's heart.

“Why did I not think to do all this?”

He went on, and joined the little crowd by the gateway of the Fort, where the school children were in front, ready with handkerchiefs and coloured ribbons, for there were no flowers to be had.

As he approached to take his stand by the gate, the children began to cheer, and he bit his lip angrily as he heard them rebuked and hushed into silence.

But he forgot all this directly, for fresh firing and the nearing of the band told that Claude must be close at hand—she for whom his heart yearned—she whom his eyes longed to see, and they grew dim in the excitement, as, forgetful of all past trouble, he strained them to catch her first glance.

Would she smile at him? Would she stop and stretch out her hands, and in spite of all

those gathered around her, should he clasp her in his arms?

All excited thoughts, as there was the crashing sound of wheels, the loud cheering caught up now by the children as the carriage which had been to meet her rolled slowly up toward the gateway.

At last. Bending forward with her pale face flushed, her eyes humid, and her black gloved hand waving her white kerchief in answer to the bursts of cheers.

Chris strained forward, and was about to press up to the carriage-door as it came slowly into the gateway to avoid crushing those who flocked round.

“Three cheers for the Queen of the Castle!” cried a loud voice; and then to Chris Lisle it was as if heaven and earth had come together.

For the voice was the voice of Glyddyr, who had risen from his seat beside Claude, unseen till then; and as the answering chorus rang out, sick almost unto death, his brain swimming and a dull throbbing at his breast, Chris shrank away without encountering Claude Gartram’s eyes, veiled almost to blindness by her tears.

CHAPTER XII.

CONSCIENCE PRICKING.

“IT does seem so hard to think that we have been away all these months, Claudie,” said Mary the next morning. “Aren’t you glad to be back once more in the dear old home?”

“Yes, dear; and no,” said Claude sadly.

“Now, who is to understand what that means? But, Claude, dear, I did not speak last night—”

“What about,” said Claude quickly.

“I don’t like to say. The subject is tabooed.”

Claude turned toward the window, so that her cousin should not see her face.

“The last time I mentioned his name you scolded me.”

Claude remained silent.

“Did you see him yesterday when we came up to the gate?”

“No.”

“He was there, and coming up to the carriage when he saw Mr Glyddyr get up to call for three cheers, and then he shrank away.”

Claude shivered, as if from a sudden chill, but she remained silent.

“May I say what I think?” asked Mary.

Claude turned upon her an agonised look.

“If you wish to give me pain,” she said, almost in a whisper; and at that moment Sarah Woodham entered the room.

“Mr Glyddyr, ma’am. He asks you to excuse his calling so early, but if you would see him for a few minutes he would be grateful.”

The shiver ran through Claude again, but she smothered her emotion.

“Show Mr Glyddyr in,” she said calmly, and Sarah Woodham’s face grew harder as she left the room.

“What are you going to say, Claude?” said Mary quickly.

“Say?”

“Yes. Why do you put on that air of ignorance? You know why he has come.”

“Mary!”

"Yes, I will speak. All these quiet calls have meant that, I am sure. He has only been waiting till you came home to ask you to be his wife."

"Hush!"

The door opened, and Glyddyr entered, looking sallow and nervous; but he began to brighten a little, as if the presence of Mary were a reprieve from the task he had set himself to do.

It was only a short one, though, for, after the first greetings, Mary rose to go.

Claude looked at her wistfully.

"Don't let me drive you away, Miss Dillon," said Glyddyr quickly.

Claude uttered no word to stay her, but sat gazing straight before her at a large photograph of her father, her eyes wild and fixed with the emotion from which she suffered, and for a few moments after the door was closed neither spoke.

"Miss Gartram—Claude," said Glyddyr, at last, in a husky voice, and at his words she started, as if from a dream.

Her look seemed to freeze him, but he had

taken the step now, and he rose and crossed to her side, taking the hand she surrendered to him unresistingly.

“Claude, you know how all these weary months I have been silent,” he whispered; “how I have feared to intrude upon you in your grief, though all the while I have suffered painfully too.”

“Yes,” she said gently, “you have been very patient with me, I know.”

“Because I dared to hope that the time might come when I could speak to you as I do now. You know how I love you, and—forgive me for saying what I do—you know how my happiness is in your hands. Tell me to be patient even now, and I will wait.”

Her wild fixed look intensified as she listened to his impassioned prayer, for she saw only the face of her father as she had seen him last in life.

“I hardly dare to say the words,” he went on; “it seems like putting pressure on one whom I want to love me of herself, to make me happy by her own gentle confession; but I must speak now, even if it gives you pain.

Claude, dearest, it was his wish. Tell me you will be my wife."

He uttered his last sentence or two in a hesitating whisper.

"You heard what I said, dearest?" he whispered.

"Yes—yes," said Claude dreamily.

"You will not hold me off longer. Claude, dearest, what can I say to move you? Is it to be always thus?"

She looked at him wildly for a few moments, and he was about to speak again, but her lips moved, and she said slowly,—

"You say it would make you happy?"

"Happy?" he exclaimed passionately, "oh, if I had but words to tell you all."

"Hush!" she said, slowly withdrawing her hand. "Six months ago I thought I saw my course marked out for me; but now all appears changed. You know how, long before we ever met—"

"Yes," he cried eagerly, "I know everything you would say, but, Claude, dearest, it is impossible. If that was to make you

happy, I would have gone away, and patiently borne all, but it is impossible."

"Yes," she said, shuddering slightly, "it is impossible."

"Then you will let me hope?" he cried quickly.

"It was my dear father's wish," she said dreamily; "I have thought of this, and what was my duty, left as I am, his child and the steward of his great wealth."

"Yes—yes!" he cried excitedly.

"It was all darkness—black, black darkness for a time, but by slow degrees the light has come."

"Claude, my love!"

"Oh, hush: pray hush!" she said with a slight shiver as she gazed straight past her wooer at the photograph upon the table. "It was his wish; and if you desire this, Parry Glyddyr, I will try to be your true and faithful wife."

"My own!" he whispered, and he tried to pass his arm around her, but she shrank back with so pained a look that he forbore. "There," he said, "I will be patient. I have

waited all these long months, and I know now how your love for me will come. I can wait. But, Claude, let me go away quite happy. How soon?"

"It was his wish."

"In a month from now?" he whispered tenderly.

"Yes," she said, still gazing past him at the photograph.

"My own!" he cried, "I had not dared to hope for this. But, Claude, dearest, why do you look so strange?"

He felt as if a hand of ice had touched him, and his own closed upon hers with a spasmodic grip, as he looked sharply round and saw the photograph, the counterfeit presentment gazing sternly in his eyes.

But Claude was too intent upon her own thoughts to notice his ghastly pallor, and, uttering a low sigh, she at last withdrew her hand.

"Do not say more to me now, Mr Glyddyr," she sighed faintly. "I am weak. The shock of coming back here has been almost more than I can bear. You will go now. Do not

think me unkind and cold, but you will leave me till to-morrow."

"Yes, yes," he cried huskily, as he forced himself to take her hand which felt like ice, and, bending over it, he pressed his lips upon the clear transparent skin. "Yes, till to-morrow," he said; and, carefully keeping his eyes averted from the photograph, he walked quickly from the room.

"Claude! Claude!" cried Mary entering, but there was no reply. "Claude!" and she laid her hand upon the girl's shoulder, to start back in alarm at the waxen face that was slowly turned towards her. "Claude, darling, don't look like that. Tell me. He did ask you?"

Claude nodded.

"And you refused him?"

She shook her head sadly.

"Oh, Claude!" cried Mary reproachfully.

"And poor Chris!"

"Silence!" said Claude excitedly. "Never mention his name again."

"But you can't—you don't think that horrible charge was true?"

“ I think it was, my dear—my dead father’s wish that I should wed Mr Glyddyr. I have prayed for strength to carry out his will.”

“ And you have accepted him ! ”

“ Mary, a woman cannot live for herself. It was my duty. In a month I shall be Parry Glyddyr’s wife.”

CHAPTER XIII.

A STRANGE WOOING.

CHRIS LISLE heard the news without showing the slightest emotion, and as soon as he was alone he sat down and wrote as follows :—

“ I pray God that you may be happy.

“ CHRIS LISLE.”

That was all, and he dropped it into the post-box himself, turned back to meet Trevithick on his way to the Fort, nodded to him and went straight to his room, where he stood for a few moments in silence.

“ Yes,” he said slowly and solemnly, “ I pray God that you may be happy.”

Then, after a pause :

“ But,” he cried, with terrible earnestness, “ if— ”

There was another pause in which he silently continued that which he might have

said. Then, with a fierce light flashing from his eyes, he clenched his hands and said in a whisper more startling than the loudest words—

“I’ll kill him as I would some venomous beast.”

He threw himself into a chair and sat looking white and changed for quite an hour before he rose up and drew a long deep breath.

“Dead!” he said softly; “dead! Now, then, to bear it—like a man—and show no sign.”

There was a gentle tap at the door.

“May I come in, sir, please?”

“Eh? Oh yes, Mrs Sarson. What is it?”

“I was going to— Oh my dear, dear boy!”

The poor woman caught his hand in hers, and kissed it, as her tears fell fast.

“Why, Mrs Sarson,” he said, smiling, “what’s the matter?”

“Oh, my dear,” she said; “you haven’t lived here with me all these years from quite

a boy as you were, without me feeling just like a mother to you. And you so alone in the world. I know what trouble you're in, and what you must feel; and it hurts me too."

"There, there. You're a good soul," he said. "But that's all over. Why, I've had the aching tooth taken out, and I'm quite a new man now."

"Oh, my dear—my dear!"

"I'm off for a few hours' fishing, and I shall want a good meat tea about six. I sha'n't be later."

He nodded cheerfully, and took his creel and rod from the passage, Mrs Sarson hurrying to the window, and watching till he was out of sight.

"Ah!" she said, shaking her head; "but it don't deceive me. I've read of them as held their hands in the fire till they were burned away; and he's a martyr, too, as would do it, without making a sign. But he can't deceive me."

Meanwhile Trevithick had gone up to the Fort to see Claude about certain business

matters connected with the quarry, and with the full intent to ask her a few questions about the missing money in spite of her former words; but on his way that morning he had heard startling news, which made his face look peculiarly serious, and he said to himself,—

“Well, it was her father’s wish, but if I don’t make the tightest marriage settlements ever drawn up I’m not an honest man.”

He was admitted by Sarah Woodham, and shown into the library, where, quite at home, he took his seat, unlocked his black bag, and began to arrange a number of endorsed papers, tied up with red tape.

“Mrs Woodham does not seem to approve of the wedding,” he said to himself. “Not a cheerful woman.”

Then he looked round the room, and in imagination searched Gartram’s safe and cash receptacles for the hundredth time.

“No,” he said, giving one ear a vicious rub, “I can’t get it that way. It was someone who knew him and his ways pretty well stole that money, or there would have been some record

left. All those thousands short. He never omitted keeping account of even trifling sums."

"And Miss Dillon does not approve of the wedding," he said to himself as Mary entered, her eyes plainly showing that she had been weeping.

"Good morning," she said, taking the chair placed for her with heavy courtesy. "My cousin is unwell, Mr Trevithick, and cannot see you. Will you either come over again or state your business to me?"

"I shall be only too glad," he said, smiling.

"I thought you would," replied Mary. "Of course you will make a charge for this journey."

Trevithick looked at her aghast; and then flushed and perspired.

"I said I should be only too glad to discuss the business with you, Miss Dillon," he said stiffly.

"No, you did not, Mr Trevithick."

"I beg pardon. That is what I meant."

"Oh! then please go on."

"Why will she always be so sharp with me?" thought the lawyer, as he looked across the table wistfully.

“Yes, Mr Trevithick? I am all attention.”

“Yes; of course,” he said, suddenly becoming very business-like, for he could deal with her then. “The little matters of business can wait, or perhaps you could take the papers up for Miss Gartram’s signature.”

“Yes; of course,” said Mary, sharply. “Where are they?”

“Here,” he said, quietly; “but there is one, I might say two things, I should like Miss Gartram’s opinion upon. Will you tell her, please?”

“Do speak a little faster, Mr Trevithick, I have a great deal to do this morning.”

“I beg your pardon. Will you please tell Miss Gartram that I am, in spite of her commands, much exercised in mind about that missing money. Tell her, please, that I have studied it from every point of view, and I am compelled to say that it is her duty to Mr Gartram deceased—that most exact of business men—to instruct me to make further inquiries into the matter.”

“It would be of no use, Mr Trevithick. I

am sure your cousin would not allow it. Is that all?"

"Will you not appeal to her from me?"

"No. I am sure she would not listen to any such suggestion. Now, is that all?"

Mary spoke in a quick, excited way, as if she wanted to get out of the room, and yet wished to stay.

"Well—no,—” he answered softly, as he kept on taking up and laying down his papers in different order.

"Mr Trevithick!"

"Pray, give me time, Miss Dillon," he protested. The fact is I have heard very important news this morning."

"Of course you have. You mean about my cousin's approaching marriage."

"Then it is true?"

"Of course it is."

Trevithick sighed.

"Well, Mr Trevithick, is that all?"

"No, madam, I may say that I am very sorry."

"Well, is that all?" cried Mary, impatiently.

“No. As the late Mr Gartram’s trusted, confidential adviser, I was aware that this was his wish, but, all the same, I am deeply grieved.”

“Of course, and so is everybody else,” said Mary passionately. “I mean,” she said, checking herself, “it seems sad for it to be so soon. That is all, I suppose.”

“No, Miss Dillon; this being so I should have liked to discuss with Miss Gartram the question of the settlements. I presume, as she has continued to trust me as her father trusted me, that she would wish me to see to all the legal matters connected with her fortune.”

“What a stupid question. Why, of course.”

“Well, forgive me; hardly a stupid question. Perhaps too retiring—for a lawyer.”

“Mr Trevithick, you are not half decided and prompt enough. Well, then; my cousin anticipated all this, and said, ‘tell Mr Trevithick to do what is right and just, and that I leave myself entirely in his hands. Tell him to do what he would have done had my father been alive.’”

“Ah!” said the lawyer slowly. “Yes; then

I will proceed at once. It is a great responsibility, as Miss Gartram has neither relative nor executor to whom she could appeal. A very great responsibility, but I will do what is just and right in her interest, tying down her property as under the circumstances should be done."

"Do—do Mr Trevithick—dear Mr Trevithick, pray do," cried Mary, starting from her seat, and advancing to the table—her old, sharp manner gone, and an intense desire to hasten the lawyer's proposals flashing from her eyes.

"I will," he said firmly; and he held out his hand. "You will trust me, Mary Dillon, as your cousin trusts me?"

"Indeed, I will," she said eagerly, and she placed her thin little white hand in his.

"Hah!" he ejaculated with a long expiration of the breath; and his great hand closed and prisoned the little one laid therein. "You told me just now that I was not decided and prompt enough."

"Yes, I did. But you are holding my hand very tightly, Mr Trevithick."

"Yes," he said quietly, "I am. That is because you are wrong. I am very decided and prompt sometimes, and I am going to be now. Mary Dillon, will you be my wife?"

"What!" she cried, flushing scarlet, and struggling to release her hand, as her eyes flashed and seemed to be reading him through and through. "Absurd!"

"No—no," he said gravely; "don't say that, even if my way and manner are absurd."

"I did not mean that," she cried quickly. "I meant to— Oh, it is absurd!" she said again, though her heart was throbbing violently, and she struggled vainly to withdraw her hand. "Look at me—weak, misshapen, pitiful. Mr Trevithick, you are mad."

"Don't try to take your hand away," he said slowly; it makes me afraid of hurting you; and don't speak again like that—you hurt me very—very much.

"But, Mr Trevithick! It is too dreadful. I cannot—I must not listen to you."

"Why? You are quite free; and you are not an heiress."

"I!" she cried bitterly. "No; I have

nothing but a pitiful few hundred pounds. Now you know the truth. Do you hear me? I am a pauper, dependent on my cousin's charity."

"I am very glad," he said, gazing at her thoughtfully, and still speaking in his slow and deliberate way. "I was afraid that perhaps you had money of which I did not know. But you will say 'yes'?"

"No; impossible. Are you blind? Look at me."

"I might say, 'Look at me,'" he retorted, with a frank, honest laugh, which lit up his countenance pleasantly. "I wish you could look at me as I do at you, and see there something that you could love. Yes," he said, his genuine passion making him speak fluently and well; "for all these long, long months, Mary, I have always had your sweet, earnest eyes before me, and your clever, bright face. I have seemed to listen to your voice, and sometimes I have been sad as I have asked myself what a woman could find in me to love."

"Ah!" ejaculated the trembling girl.

“And I’ve felt that, when you have said all those many sharp, hard things to me, that they were not quite real, and when your words have been most cruel, I’ve dared to fancy that your eyes seemed to be sorry that your tongue could be so bitter.”

“Mr Trevithick, pray!”

“And then I’ve hoped and waited, and thought of what you were.”

“Yes,” said Mary bitterly, as she made a gesture with one hand.

“Bah!” he cried, “what of that? An accident when you were a child. I would not have you different for worlds. I want those two dear eyes to look into mine, true and trustful and clever. You, to whom I can come home from my work for help and counsel, to be everything to me—my wife. Mary dear, in my slow and clumsy way I love you very dearly, and your cousin’s wedding has brought it all out. I didn’t think I could make love like that.”

He took her other hand, and gazed at her very fondly as she stood by his side, with the tears streaming down her cheeks.

“ You are not angry with me, dear ? ”

“ No,” she said gently ; “ I am sorry.”

“ Why ? ”

“ For you. See how the world will sneer.”

“ What ! ” he cried eagerly. “ Then you will ? ”

She looked at him searchingly, as if a lingering doubt were there, and a shadow of suspicion were making her try to see if he was truly in earnest.

“ No, no,” she said, as a sob burst from her lips ; “ it is impossible.” And she struggled hard to get away.

“ Impossible ! ” he said, as he tightened his grasp. “ Tell me one thing, Mary. You knew I loved you ? ”

She nodded quickly.

“ And—you don’t think me ridiculous ? ”

“ I think you the truest, most honest gentleman I ever saw,” she sobbed ; “ but—”

“ Ah ! ” he said, with a pleasant little satisfied laugh, “ that settles it, then. The impossibility has gone like smoke. Mary dear, I never hoped to be so happy as you have made me now.”

His great arms enfolded her for a moment,

during which she lay panting on his breast, then, struggling to free herself, she caught and kissed one of his hands.

“Hah!” he ejaculated, “now we must think of some one else.”

He led her gently back to her chair, and bent down to kiss her forehead. Then, returning to his seat as calmly as if nothing had happened,—

“I can talk freely to you now, Mary,” he said. “Is not this a great mistake?”

“Yes,” she said, with an arch look, full of her newly-found joy.

“No, no; you know what I mean. We must be very serious now. I don’t like this Mr Glyddyr.”

“I hate him,” cried Mary.

“Well, that’s honest,” he said, smiling. “But it was her father’s wish, and I suppose it is to be.”

“Yes; it is to be. Nothing would turn her now.”

John Trevithick did not say, “And is this to be soon?” but he thought it, and set the idea aside.

“No,” he said to himself; “we must wait.” And soon after, calm, quiet and business-like, he went away to draw up the marriage settlements tightly on Claude’s behalf, and wondered whether he could ever manage to trace that missing cash.

He took out a pocket-book, and turned to a certain page covered with figures, and ran it down.

“Only a few of these notes have reached the bank. Well, some day I may come upon a clue in a way I least expect.

“Impossible, eh?” he said, with a smile of content. “Bless her sweet eyes! I won’t believe in the impossible now.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“AND THIS IS BEING MARRIED.”

“You are sure you don’t mind me talking about it, sir?”

“Mind! Oh, no, Mrs Sarson, say what you like.”

“Well, you see, sir, even if one is a widow and growing old, one can’t help feeling interested in weddings. I suppose it’s being a woman. Everybody’s dreadfully disappointed.”

“Indeed,” said Chris coldly.

“And, yes, indeed, sir. No big party; no wedding breakfast and cake; no going away in chaises and fours. If poor Mr Gartram had been alive, it wouldn’t have been like this. Why, do you know, sir, the quarry folk were getting ready powder and going to fire guns, and make a big bonfire on the cliffs; but Mr Trevithick, the lawyer, went to them with a

message from Miss Claude, sir, asking for them to do nothing; and they're just going to the church and back to the big house, and not even going away."

"Indeed!"

"Oh, yes, sir, and I did hear that Miss Claude actually wanted to be married in black, but Miss Mary Dillon persuaded her not. I heard it on the best of authority, sir."

Chris made no reply, and, finding no encouragement, Mrs Sarson cleared her lodger's breakfast things away, and left the room.

The moment he was alone, Chris started from his chair to stand with his back to the light; his teeth set hard and fists clenched as a spasm of mental agony for the moment mastered him.

"No," he said, after a few moments, with a bitter laugh, "this won't do. What is it to me? I can bear it now like a man. She shall see how indifferent I am."

For it was the morning of the ill-starred wedding—a morning in which Nature seemed to be in the mood to make everything depressing, for the wind blew hard, bringing

from the Atlantic a drenching shower, through which, with Gellow for his best man, Glyddyr would have to drive to the little church. Meanwhile, he was having so severe a shivering fit at the hotel where he had been staying, that his companion had become alarmed, and suggested calling in the doctor.

“Bah! nonsense! Ring for some brandy.”

“And I’ll take a flask to the church,” said Gellow to himself, “or the brute will break down. We’re going to have a jolly wedding seemingly. Only wants that confounded Frenchwoman to get scent of it, and come down, and then we should be perfect.”

“That’s better,” said Gellow, after the brandy had been brought. “But what a day! What a cheerful look-out! I say, Glyddyr, am I dreaming? Is it a wedding this morning or a funeral?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, it looks more like the latter. I say: Young Lisle won’t come and have a pop at you in the church?”

Glyddyr turned ghastly.

“You—you don’t think—”

"Bah! My chaff. You are out of sorts; on your wedding day, too. Hold hard with that brandy, or it will pop you off, and not Lisle. Steady, man, steady."

"Gellow, it's all over," gasped the miserable man. "I shall never be able to go through with it."

"Oh, if I can only get this morning over," said Gellow to himself; and then aloud,—

"Nonsense, my dear boy, you're a bit nervous, that's all. I suppose a man is when he's going to be married. You're all right. Come, have a devilled kidney or a snack of something. You don't eat enough."

"Eat?" said Glyddyr, with a shudder. "No; I seem to have no appetite now."

"Come on, and let's get it over. Here's the carriage waiting. Steady, man, steady. No; not a drop more."

"The carriage is at the door, sir," said the waiter, and striving hard to be firm, and to master a tremulous sensation about his knees, Glyddyr walked out into the hall, where a buzzing sound that was heard suddenly ceased till the pair were in the carriage, from whose roof

the rain was streaming. Then, after banging too the door, the waiter dashed back under shelter, the dripping horses started off, and the carriage disappeared in the misty rain.

"Looks as if he was going to execution," said the man, with a laugh, as he dabbed the top of his head with his napkin. "Well, it do rain to-day."

At the Fort everything had gone on that morning in a calm, subdued way that seemed to betoken no change. Claude came down to breakfast as usual, and sat looking dreamily before her, while Mary, red-eyed and sorrowful, had not the heart to speak.

Trevithick had slept there the previous night, and was the only guest, for Doctor Asher had declined to be present, on the score of professional calls.

"I'm afraid there is very little chance of its holding up," said Trevithick, when they rose from the scarcely-touched breakfast.

"No, Mr Trevithick," said Claude quietly, "I think we shall have a very wet day. Mary, dear, we must take our waterproofs. It is fifty yards from the lych-gate to the

church door. Isn't it time we went up to dress?"

She moved towards the door, but came back, and held out her hand to the lawyer.

"Forgive me for being so absent and strange with you," she said, with a faint smile. "You have been very good and kind to me, but I dare say you think all this odd and unnatural."

"Oh, no; not at all," said Trevithick, colouring like a girl.

"It was the only thing in which I asked to have my way—to let the wedding be perfectly quiet. Don't be long, Mary."

Trevithick looked at his little betrothed as the door closed, and she looked up at him.

"I say, Mary, dear," he said, "is she quite—you know what I mean. I feel almost as if I ought to interfere."

"Oh, John, John," cried the little thing, bursting into a passionate fit of weeping; "if we could only stop it even now!"

She sobbed on his breast for a few seconds, and then hastily wiped her eyes.

"There, I'm better now," she said. "I've

talked to her till I'm tired, but it's of no use. 'It's my *duty*,' is all she will say. Oh! why did people ever invent the horrid word. Don't say anything, John, dear. Let's get it over, and hope for the best; but if there's any chance of our wedding being like this, let's shake hands like Christians, forgive one another, and say good-bye."

She ran out of the room, and Trevithick sat watching the rain trickle down the window-panes, and tried to follow the course of a big ship struggling up Channel, its storm topsails dimly seen through the mist of rain.

"I wouldn't be on that ship for all I've saved," he said, shaking his head. "Looks as if there was going to be a wreck.

"So there is," he said, after a pause, "a social wreck, and I'm going to assist. No, I'm not. I'm looking after the salvage. Poor girl! Gartram must have been mad."

His meditations were broken in upon by the sound of wheels. Half-an-hour later the door was thrown open.

"Now, Mr Trevithick, please," said Mary; and he hurried into the hall to find Claude

ready and looking very calm and composed.

"Good-bye," she was saying to first one and then another of the maids, who, catching the contagion, burst into tears.

"As if it wasn't wet enough already," said Reuben Brime, who stood with the footman by the carriage-door.

"Good-bye, Woodham, dear," said Claude, holding out her hand, but snatching it back directly as she yielded to a sudden impulse, and threw her arms around the stern-looking woman's neck. "Thank you for all that you have done."

"Good-bye! Why did she say good-bye?" thought Woodham, as Trevithick handed the bride into the carriage, the drops from the edge of the portico falling like great tears upon her hair. "Yes: good-bye to youth and happiness and your sweet young life."

The carriage-door was banged, and banged again, for the wet had made it hard to shut. Then, as the footman mounted to his place on the box, the gardener hurried round in front

of the horses, and ran for the short cut over the cliffs to the church.

“Shouldn’t you go, Mrs Woodham?” said one of the maids.

Sarah Woodham shook her head.

“They will soon be back,” she said. “I’m going to stay to meet the new master.”

“Why does not something happen to stop this hateful match?” she muttered to herself. “My poor girl. My poor, dear girl.”

The carriage sped on through the driving rain, and the little party descended at the church gate, where a few fishermen were gathered in their yellow and black oilskins to follow them, dripping, into the little church, while it seemed to Claude that it was only the other day that her father was borne to his resting-place. And there they were, standing face to face before God’s altar, she pale, sad and composed, having to give her whole love and life to the pale trembling man who faced her, and who, though she knew it not, exhaled a strong odour of the spirits he had taken to enable him to go through the task.

But Claude saw nothing, realised nothing

but the words of the clergyman, repeating every response in a low, earnest tone right on to the end, when, as the last words of the service was uttered, there was the sound of some one drawing a long, deep breath.

It was only Gellow's way of congratulating himself on the fact that his money and much more were safe at last.

"Now!" he muttered, as he hugged himself. "Now you may have *D.T.*, or anything you like."

The book was signed, and the few fishermen and women who had braved the storm began to go clattering out of the church as Glyddyr, making an effort to look happy and content, held his arm to his newly-made bride to lead her down the little nave.

"Father, dear, it was your wish," said Claude softly, and, with a sigh, she raised her eyes towards the faint light which came through the west window.

Then she stopped short, gazing wildly at where Chris Lisle stood like a black silhouette against the dim lattice panes, as he had stood with folded arms right through the service.

He made no sign ; he uttered no sound, his features hardly visible from the position against the light ; but the sight of that figure was enough to bring like a flood the recollections of the past, and of what might have been, but for her irrevocable step ; and, snatching her hand from her husband's arm, Claude clasped her forehead as she uttered a low, faint cry, and fell heavily upon the floor.

“Keep back, all of you !” cried Glyddyr excitedly. “Do you hear, keep back. The carriage, there. Do you hear me ? Keep back !”

He lifted Claude from where she lay, and bore her out, holding her tightly in his arms, as if he feared that she might be snatched away by him who had caused this shock.

“Curse him !” he muttered, as the carriage was driven back to the Fort at a canter ; “but he's too late. The dark horse has won, Chris Lisle, and the stakes are mine.”

Claude was still insensible when the carriage stopped, and Glyddyr resigned her to Sarah Woodham's arms.

“A bit faint, that's all,” he said, with a half laugh. “She'll be better soon.”

“You—you are married, sir?” faltered the woman, looking at him wildly.

“You bet!” he snarled, as he turned away, and strode into the library, but came back looking ghastly and slamming the door. “Here, some one bring the spirits into the dining-room; not in there. Quick! don’t you see your mistress is taken ill?”

“Open the door,” whispered Woodham; “we’ll take her in there.”

“No; in the dining-room—anywhere,” cried Glyddyr. “Don’t take her there.

“And this is being married!” he muttered, as soon as he was alone. “The cad! The coward! But I’ve bested him, and I’m a free man once again, and master here.”

They had carried Claude into the dining-room; and, hardly caring where he went, Glyddyr had entered the drawing-room, thrown to the door, and was walking hurriedly up and down, till, as he uttered the last words, his eyes fell upon the large photograph of Gartram.

He stopped short, with his eyes showing a ring of white about the iris, and the cold

sweat glistening upon his forehead till the spasm of dread passed away. Then dashing forward, he was about to tear the likeness from its easel and frame, but the door was suddenly opened, and he recovered himself, and turned to face Trevithick and his best man, for he had not heard the wheels as the second carriage stopped.

CHAPTER XV.

“ONLY WAIT.”

THE occupants of the Fort were broken up into little parties on that eventful day. Claude seemed to go from one fit into another, and her cousin and Sarah Woodham did not leave her side.

Brime had been despatched for Doctor Asher, but had come back with a message that the doctor had been taken ill, and could not leave his home, but they were not to be alarmed. It was only hysteria, he wrote, and all needed was quiet and rest.

Trevithick had betaken himself to the library, where he sat alone, waiting for tidings, and had at last taken his note-book from his pocket, as if inspired by the place, and began to run over the numbers of the missing notes.

“I can’t go away till afternoon,” he had said to himself; “and till I have had a quiet few minutes with Mary.”

In the dining-room Glyddyr was now alone with Gellow, and there had been a scene.

“Look here,” said the latter, after partaking heartily of the breakfast, “I’m not a man who boasts, and I suppose my principles, as people call ’em, are not of the best, but, ’pon my soul, Glyddyr, if I couldn’t show up better after marrying a girl like that, I’d go and hang myself.”

“Bah !”

“No, you don’t; not a drop more,” continued Gellow, laying his hand upon a bottle of champagne that Glyddyr was about to take. “You’ve had too much now. When I’m gone, you can do as you like. You’re master here, but I won’t sit and see you go on like this.”

“It don’t hurt me. I’m as sober as you are.”

“P’r’aps so, now; but what will you be by-and-by? Hang it all, Glyd, you’ve got the girl, and the money, and you can pay me off. She’s a little darling, that’s what she is, and I’d turn over a fresh leaf—clean the slate and begin square now, I would, ’pon my soul. Do you hear?”

"Yes, I hear."

"And now I think I'll go back to the hotel ; you don't want me."

"Eh ! What ? No, no ; don't go," said Glyddyr excitedly.

"Not go ?"

"No, man, no ; don't go and leave me here alone."

"Well, upon my soul, Glyddyr, you are a one."

"That fellow, Lisle. You saw him in the corner. He means mischief. I'm sure he does."

"Let him. You're King of the Castle now. Keep him out. Don't be such a cur."

"He's half mad. I know he is. I don't want a scene. I should kill him if he came."

"Yes, you look as if you would."

"And I haven't done much for you yet. We shall want to talk business."

"What, on your wedding day ! Nonsense. I'll go back to the hotel."

"No, no. There is plenty of room in the place—for a friend. You must stop here for a few days."

“ Oh, very well. Play policeman, eh, and keep t’other fellow off. I see your little game. Cheerful for me, though, all the same.”

“ Help me to get rid of that lawyer; I don’t want him hanging about.—Gellow.”

“ Well ? ”

“ Why didn’t I insist upon going over to Paris or Baden as soon as we were married ? ”

“ How should I know ? I suppose I may light a cigar now. Your wife won’t object ? ”

“ It was her doing,” said Glyddyr thoughtfully. “ She insisted on staying.”

“ No, you don’t. If I’m to play policeman, no more drink, or very little, do you have to-day.”

Gellow drew the bottle farther away again, and Glyddyr threw himself back in his chair and began gnawing his nails.

“ Ugh ! ”

“ What’s the matter now ? ” said Gellow, as Glyddyr shuddered.

“ I don’t know. Somehow I don’t like this place.”

“ Buy it off you, if you like. But, I say, hadn’t you better ring and ask after your wife ? ”

About this time, as John Trevithick sat cogitating over his memoranda, seeking for the light where all was dark, the door opened, and Mary came in.

“ Ah ! How is she now ? ”

“ Very ill. I have left her for a few minutes in the drawing-room with Sarah Woodham,” said Mary, with a catching of the breath. “ Oh, John, how cruel of Chris Lisle to come and do that.”

“ I don’t know,” said Trevithick thoughtfully. “ I’m afraid I should have acted the same. But there : the mischief is done. I’m glad you’ve come. I wanted to see you before I went.”

“ Before you went ? Oh ! ” exclaimed Mary, catching at his hand, “ you must not go.”

“ Not go ? Oh, I’m not wanted here.”

“ You don’t know,” cried Mary excitedly. “ Don’t leave us, John. I’m frightened. It all seems so horrible. Suppose Chris Lisle were to come ? ”

“ Chris Lisle would not be so mad.”

“ I don’t know. I saw his face, poor fellow, and it looked dreadful, and I have just seen

Mr Glyddyr. I went to the dining-room to see if you were there. He looks ghastly, and he has been drinking. For Claude's sake, pray stay."

"You do not know what you are saying, my dear," said the big lawyer gently. "Mr Glyddyr is master here now. But I'm afraid you are right. He had been drinking before he came. I cannot interfere."

"Not to protect her?"

"No, I have no right."

"Then stop to protect me, John, dear," she whispered.

"The law gives me no right," he said slowly, "but if you put it in that way, why, hang the law!"

"And you will stay?"

"Yes, my dear, if I have to wring Parry Glyddyr's neck."

"Ah, now you are speaking like yourself," cried Mary, drawing a breath full of relief. "I'm not a bit afraid now."

Just then a bell rang, and Mary ran out of the room, to find Sarah Woodham anxiously awaiting her, for Claude was pacing the floor

wildly, her face flushed, and the excitement from which she suffered finding vent in rapid, almost incoherent words.

She ran to Mary and clung to her, sobbing out,—

"Don't—don't leave me again, dear. Stay with me. I cannot bear it. Oh, Mary, Mary, I must have been mad—I must have been mad."

"Hush, darling! Be calm; try and be calm."

"Calm! You do not know—you do not know. Stop!" she cried wildly, as she saw Woodham cross gently towards the drawing-room door. "Don't leave me. If you care for me now, pray stay."

"Claude, dear, this is terrible," said Mary firmly. "You are acting like a child."

Claude sank upon her knees and buried her face in her cousin's dress.

"Don't think me cruel or unfeeling to you, but what can we do or say? You are Mr Glyddyr's wife."

"Yes, I know," wailed Claude. Then, looking excitedly in her cousin's face, "I did not

know then. I was blind to it all. Mary, what have I done? Tell me—that man—he has married me—for the fortune—tell him to take all and set me free.”

“My own darling cousin,” whispered Mary, sinking upon her knees, to draw Claude’s face to her breast. “No, no, no; all that is impossible. This fit will pass off, and you must be brave and strong. Try and think, dear, of what you said. It was poor uncle’s wish.”

“Yes, yes, yes,” said Claude wearily; and she struggled to her feet, to throw herself into one of the lounges and sit wringing her hands involuntarily, dragging at one finger until the little golden circle, lately placed there, passed over the joint, and at last flew off, to fall trinkling in the fender.

Claude uttered a faint cry, and covered her face with her hands, while Woodham and Mary stood gazing at each other till the former crossed softly and picked up the ring from where it lay.

“Claude, darling,” said Mary, as, after a little hesitation, she took the ring from Woodham, and gently drawing her cousin’s hand

from her face, began to slip the little token back into its place.

There was no resistance, only a helpless, dazed expression in Claude's face, as she dropped her hand into her lap, and sat back gazing down at her cousin's act, shuddering slightly, and then closing her eyes.

They drew back, watching her for some time, and at last Woodham crept cautiously forward, peering anxiously into her mistress's face, watching the regular rise and fall of her breast, and then gave Mary a satisfied nod, as they stole very softly away to the far end of the room, and sat down to watch.

“Exhausted, Miss Mary, asleep,” whispered Woodham. “Oh, my dear, what can we do?”

“Nothing,” whispered back Mary bitterly; “only wait.”

The wind increased, setting in more and more for one of the western gales. The rain beat at the windows and the storm came in fierce squalls, as if to tear down the unhappy house; but hours went by, and Claude had not moved, remaining plunged in a kind of stupor more than sleep.

And so the weary hours went on, broken only by the sound of an opening or closing door, and faintly heard voices which made the watchers start and glance anxiously towards the door in anticipation of Glyddyr's coming; but he did not leave the dining-room, and Trevithick remained still in the library, where, through Woodham's forethought, refreshments had been taken to him twice.

As the night closed in, a lamp was lit, and a screen drawn before the table where it stood so as to leave the spot where Claude lay back in darkness, and once more the watchers sat waiting.

It was about eight o'clock, when, after for the twentieth time stealing across to her cousin's side, and returning, Mary placed her lips to Woodham's ear.

"I am getting frightened at her state," she whispered; "surely we ought to send over for the doctor."

"No, my dear," said Woodham sadly. "Let her rest. It will be better than anything the doctor can do."

"Woodham," whispered Mary again, "it

seems horrible to say, but I feel as if I could poison that man and set her free."

Sarah Woodham's jaw dropped, and as she sank back, Mary could see that her eyes were wide and staring.

"Sarah, you foolish woman, don't take what I say like that."

The woman struggled to recover herself, and she gasped,—

"It was so horrible, Miss Mary; for thoughts like that came to me."

"But, Sarah," whispered Mary, "I did not think of it before; when she wakes, if she is wild like that again, there is some of poor uncle's medicine in the library—there is a bottle of that chloral that had not been opened. Would it be wise to give her some of it to make her calm?"

"Miss Mary!" gasped Woodham, as she pressed her hand to her side. "Hush! Don't! You—oh, pray, pray, don't talk of that!"

Mary looked at her wonderingly, the woman's excitement seemed so wild and strange.

"No, it would not be wise," she said.

At that moment there was the sound of the dining-room door being opened, and Claude sprang to her feet.

"Mary! Woodham!" she panted. "He is coming.

"Claude! Claude, darling!" cried Mary, with a sob, as she flew to her cousin's arms.

"Keep Woodham here too. He's coming! Do you hear?"

"But, Claude, dearest, he is master here. You made him so. You are his wife."

"Yes, Mary. I was blind and mad. I forced myself to it, thinking it must be my father's will—my duty to the dead. But it is too horrible. Chris could not have done this thing."

"No, no, my poor darling; he could not have been so vile."

And as the cousins clung together, Mary felt the heart that beat against hers fluttering like that of some prisoner bird. There was the sound of an angry voice in the hall, and then a door was opened.

"Oh, you're there, are you?"

"Yes, Mr Glyddyr, I am here."

"Then why didn't you come into the dining-room like a man, not stop hiding there. What the hell do you mean?"

"Don't go on like that, old fellow," said another voice. "Here, come back into the dining-room. Mr Trevithick will join us, perhaps."

"Hold your tongue, curse you! Here, you—you can go back into your hole; and as to you, Gellow, I know what I'm about. Come along."

The voices died away, as if the speakers had gone back into the dining-room, and the door swung to.

"Ah!" ejaculated Claude, with a piteous sigh.

"I know what I'm about," came loudly again, followed by the banging of a door and a step in the hall.

"Mary!"

"Claude, dear, you must. He is your husband."

"And I love Chris still with all my heart."

"Claude!" whispered Mary, as the door was thrown open, and Glyddyr strode in.

“Here, Claude, where are you? Why don’t you have more lights? Oh, there you are, and our little cousin, eh? Now, woman, you can go.”

Sarah Woodham gave her mistress one wild, pitying look, and then left the room.

“Ah, that’s better,” said Glyddyr, whose face was flushed, but his gait was steady, and there was an insolent smile upon his lips. “Only been obliged to entertain my best man,” he said, with a laugh; and he gave his head a shake, and suddenly stretched out a hand to steady himself. “But kept myself all right.”

It was plain to Mary that the man had been drinking heavily, and her spirit rose with indignation and horror, mingled with excitement at her cousin’s avowal.

“Mary, don’t leave me,” whispered Claude.

“Now, then, little one, you go and talk to the other fellows; I want to have a chat with my wife.”

He laughed in a low, chuckling way, for he had long ago mastered Gellow’s opposition, and been told to drink himself blind if he liked. And he had drunk till his miserable feeling of abject

dread had been conquered for the moment, while, inured as he was to the use of brandy, he only seemed to be unsteady at times.

"Do you hear?" he said sharply. "Why don't you go?"

"Claude, dearest, what shall I do?" whispered Mary.

"Stay with me, Mary, pray," panted Claude. And she looked wildly round for a way of escape, her eyes resting last upon the window, which opened over a steep portion of the cliff.

"Oh! what are you thinking?" said Mary wildly.

"Ah!" exclaimed Glyddyr, with a savage expression crossing his face, "the window? No; he's not there. Curse him! I could shoot him like a dog."

"Claude, covered her quivering face with her hands.

"Yes, madam, it's time we came to a little explanation about that, and then we can go on happily. No trifling with me.—Now then," he cried fiercely, "will you go?"

"No," cried Mary, turning upon him so sharply that he dropped the hand he had

raised to seize her by the shoulder. "How dare you come into my cousin's presence like this? Shame upon you! She is ill—agitated—not fit to meet you now, and you dare to force your way to her like this—drunken as one of the quarrymen at his worst."

"What!"

"Is this the gentleman who begged and pleaded and humbled himself to her? You shall not stop here now, master or no master—husband or no husband. She is my dear cousin, and—"

"She is my wife," thundered Glyddyr. "My slave if I like; and as for you—"

"Oh, would that my uncle were alive to see his cruel work!"

Those last words were like a sharp blow in Glyddyr's face, and he stepped back, looked quickly round, and a shudder ran through him as he turned pale. But it was momentary. The potent brandy was strong in its influence still, and he recovered himself.

"Bah! nonsense!" he cried, with the flush coming back into his face. "I'm not to be fooled like that. There; be off at once."

He took a couple of steps forward.

"Come, Claude ; there has been enough of this."

Claude flinched away toward the window, and Mary sprang between them.

"Not while you are like this," she cried.

Glyddyr uttered an angry snarl, seized Mary savagely by the arm, and gripped the frail limb so cruelly that, in spite of her determined courage, she uttered a piercing cry for help.

"Silence, you little vixen.—Hah !"

It was as if the arm of a giant had suddenly interposed, for Glyddyr was seized by John Trevithick, dashed staggering back, to totter three or four yards, catch at a little table to save himself, and drag it over with him in his fall.

"Curse you !" he roared, as he rose to his hands and knees ; and then, uttering a wild cry of horror, he backed away from the picture he had dragged with him to the floor, one which had fallen, with its little velvet-covered table-easel to which it had been secured, on end, and close to his face.

It was as if Gartram had come back to him from the dead to interpose between him and his child; and, with that shriek of horror, Gladdy fell over sideways, his face contorted, his eyes staring, his teeth gnashing, and the foam gathering upon his lips.

“Take him away! take him away!” he shrieked, and then lay uttering strangely inhuman sounds as he writhed in the agonies of a fit.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW JOHN TREVITHICK HUNG ABOUT.

FOR weeks Parry Glyddyr lay almost at the point of death, and there were times when Sarah Woodham shuddered and left the room, barring the door against all comers, as the poor wretch raved in his delirium about poison, and the dead coming back to torture him and drag him down.

His ravings were so frightful that at times the hard, stern woman was quite unnerved; but she refused all assistance, and returned to her post, keeping the young wife from being present at all such scenes.

Asher had sternly refused to attend him, after being present during one of Glyddyr's fits of raving. So the rival from the upper part of the little Churchtown took his place, and after a week's attendance laid before Claude and her friends the necessity for calling in further help.

The result was that the young wife insisted upon the presence of an eminent medical man from London, and was present afterwards when the great magnate had been in consultation.

"It is most painful, madam," he said, "to have to speak out before you; but since you insist—"

"Yes; I do insist," said Claude firmly. "Let us all know the truth."

"The truth is this, madam," he said; "Mr Glyddyr—"

He paused, and looked round the drawing-room, where Mary, Trevithick and Gellow were seated.

"—Mr Glyddyr, though apparently naturally of a good constitution, has completely shattered his health by terrible excesses in the use of stimulants. Our friend here, my brother practitioner, has done everything possible, and has accepted a few suggestions of mine which I hope will have good results."

"But you will save his life, Doctor?" said Claude piteously.

“I hope yes, my dear madam. I think I can say you may rely upon our friend here. It will be a long and tedious recovery, no doubt, and afterwards it will rest with you to save him from the temptation of further indulgence.—And if he is not an idiot he will thank his stars for his fate,” added the great Doctor himself.

“And I will try so hard, so hard,” vowed Claude. “It was like a judgment upon me. Yes, I will try to be his good, true wife, and bring him back to a better life.”

Thus, on her knees that night, ere she lay down to rest.

“Talks, does he, of murder, eh?” said Gellow. “Yes, Mr Trevithick, they do at times. Never had *D.T.*, I suppose?”

“No, sir ; I never had.”

“Good job for you. I had once, and that was enough for me. I didn’t swear off, but I swore a little way on. I’ve had ’em, sir. Snakes in your boots — blue-devils, things crawling all over you ; it’s enough to make you shiver to think of it.”

“ I suppose so.”

“ You won’t believe me, but I couldn’t keep him away from the stuff.”

“ Then he has been in the habit of drinking a great deal ? ”

“ Great deal isn’t half big enough, sir.”

“ Then don’t you think it would have been your duty to warn Miss Gartram of the character of the man she was about to wed ? ”

“ Split on my friend ; get up an action for slander ; set the young lady against me ; and perhaps have poor old Glyddyr knock me on the head. No, sir : I’m not that sort of man. There, good evening. If you want me, I shall be at the hotel. I seem to be the poor chap’s only friend, and I can’t go back to town till I see him safe.”

“ I don’t like that man,” said Trevithick. “ He has some hold on Glyddyr, I am sure.”

As the great doctor prophesied, it was a long, slow recovery, and there were returns of the delirium and horrible nights when Glyddyr appeared to be haunted by one who was always reproaching him for some deed, and Sarah Woodham would sit, looking at him wildly,

and with the past and her oath to her dead husband slowly revolving in her mind.

Then the invalid began to mend, and became constant in his demands for Claude.

“Where is she?” he would ask with a quick, jealous eagerness if she were away from his room for an hour; and on her return from one of the walks necessary for her health, he would cross-examine her, gazing at her searchingly, as to where she had been and whom she had seen.

Claude had nothing to conceal, and she answered him quietly and without resentment; but she did not—and she knew it—allay the pang of mad jealousy in her husband’s breast.

“It is a judgment on me,” she used to say, “for I gave him cause.”

Time glided on, and Glyddyr began to be about, at first in an invalid chair, and then he was able to walk up and down a little on the terraces of the Fort; and as the rough fishermen of the place saw him, there was a quiet nudge passed on, as they said that the new King of the Castle was not like the old.

As he grew better, he looked a haggard,

sallow being, with wild, restless eyes, which appeared to be always on the lookout for some anticipated danger or trouble, and the sight of Chris Lisle passing in the distance was sufficient at any time to make him turn angrily upon his wife, and, clinging to her arm, bid her help him in doors.

Claude never showed even that she was hurt, but bore his taunts and peevish remarks patiently, always with the same grave, calm pale face. But in the solitude of her own room, or when clasped in Mary's arms, she sobbed wildly at times to relieve her overladen breast.

Trevithick had his legal business to transact at the Fort, but he never resented the sneers and snarls of its owner, who was constantly making allusions as to the probable length of his bill.

"And I deserve it all, Mary, dear," Trevithick used to say. "I could do it all by means of letters, except when I wanted a signature witnessed; but of course I sha'n't charge."

"But why do you come?" asked Mary de-

murely ; “ I’m sure this place is miserable enough. It’s a perfect purgatory.”

“ For shame ! ” he said, with a quiet, happy smile ; “ why, it’s a perfect paradise, dear, and unless I’m very hard at work, I’m wretched unless I’m here.—Mary, dear ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ When is it to be ? ”

“ What ? ”

“ Our wedding.”

“ How can you ask me such a thing ? As if I could ever think of leaving poor Claude. And besides, after such a lesson upon what matrimony really is, I wonder that you should ever renew the subject.”

“ No, you don’t, dear,” he said, gaining possession of the little white hand, which pretended to escape, and then resigned itself to its fate, while Trevithick’s countenance told how truthful were his words.

“ Tell me when it shall be,” he said in a whisper.

“ When I can see Claude happy.—John, couldn’t she have a divorce ? ”

“ For what reason ? ”

"Because she does not love him; and the way in which he treats her with his horrid jealousy is maddening."

"That's no reason."

"No reason? Why, I thought people could be divorced if they could prove cruelty."

"Yes—legal cruelty. No, my dear, jealousy and suspicion will not do."

"Why did you come over to-day?"

"Business. I had to see old Mrs Sarson at the cottage where Mr Lisle lodges. She's ill."

"What for? You are not a doctor."

"No," he said, with a chuckle, "but about her affairs. She thinks it time to make a will and arrange about her savings. Curious old body."

"Why?"

"Troubled with poor Mr Gartram's complaint."

"What do you mean?"

"Distrust. She has all her savings hoarded up, and next time I go she has promised to place them in my hands for investment."

"Don't talk about that. I hate the very name of money. I wish poor Claude hadn't a

shilling, and we were both free girls, able to do what we liked."

Trevithick laughed.

"How can you be so cruel, sir?" cried Mary. "Oh, John, dear, that man is killing poor Claude. Seriously, can't you discover some way to separate them?"

Trevithick shook his head.

"Then Claude will separate herself."

"I wish she could. But how?" said Trevithick, with a sigh.

"By dying."

"What?"

"Yes," said Mary, with the tears in her eyes.

"I can see beneath all that calm, patient way of hers. Her heart is broken, John; and before six months are over she will—"

Poor Mary could not finish, but sank upon her knees at Trevithick's feet, laid her face in her hands, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER XVII.

A CLIMAX IN GLYDDYR'S LIFE.

THERE was a scene one day at the Fort when, after finishing the business in connection with a heavy sum which had been raised to pay over to Gellow, the lawyer had taken upon himself to suggest that it was not fair to his old client's daughter that such a heavy drain should be kept up on the fortune she had brought him.

This was sufficient to send Glyddyr into a fit of passion, with the result that Trevithick was ordered to give up all charge of the estate for the future, and hand his papers over to another solicitor, who was named.

“Very good, Mr Glyddyr,” said the lawyer quietly. “As far as you have claims I will do so; but I must remind you that I am your wife's trustee, and even if she wished to obey you, I cannot be ousted from that.”

Claude suffered bitterly for this when the lawyer was gone, but she forbore to speak. She felt that she was forced to give up the hints and friendly counsel of one whom her father trusted, and she trembled lest there should be a breach with regard to Mary, and that she should lose her. Sarah Woodham had been abused and insulted almost beyond bearing a hundred times, and ordered to go, but she always smiled sadly in Claude's face afterwards.

"Don't you be afraid, my dear," she used to say. "Let him say what he will, I'll never leave you."

One day Sarah Woodham entered the room to find Mary in tears, but as they were hastily dried, they were ignored.

"I beg pardon, miss ; I thought Mr Trevithick was here."

"Why should you think that?"

"Because I saw him at the hotel half-an-hour ago."

"No ; he has not been, and is not likely to come after such treatment as he received from Mr Glyddyr a fortnight ago."

“Going out, miss?” said Sarah, as she saw Mary beginning to dress hurriedly.

“Yes. Where is your master—in the garden?”

“No, miss. He has gone down to the quarry.”

“With your mistress?”

“No, Miss Mary. She is in the garden.”

Mary shuddered as she thought of the future, and of Glyddyr’s recovery of his health.

“Are you cold, Miss Mary?” said Woodham earnestly.

“Yes—I mean no. That is—nothing. If Miss Claude—”

She stopped short.

“I mean, if your mistress calls for me, say I have gone for a walk. No, no, no,” she cried passionately. “I must not go. If he knew that I had been out, it would cause trouble.”

Sarah Woodham sighed. The words were incontrovertible.

Mary began to take off her things, but changed her mind and put them on again.

"I will go. I must see him," she said. "You shall go with me, Sarah. It would not look so then—would it?"

"I think, as Mr Trevithick cannot come here now, you have a perfect right to go and see him."

"Mr Trevithick!" cried Mary, with her face aflame; "why do you say that? I did not speak of going to see Mr Trevithick."

"No, Miss Mary—no, my dear; but do you think I did not know. And I'm very, very glad."

Mary was looking at her with flashing eyes, but the flames were put out by her tears, and she caught and pressed Sarah's hand.

"You don't seem like a servant to us," she whispered quickly. "Come with me, please."

Five minutes later they were on their way down the slope to the beach, with Mary trembling at what she thought was her daring behaviour; and as she walked on everybody she passed seemed to know where she was going, and to crown her confusion, just as they were nearing Mrs Sarson's, Chris Lisle came out, nodded to her, changing colour a

little, and was about to pass her, but he stopped short.

It was the first time they had met for months.

“Will you shake hands, Mary?” he said, raising his own hesitatingly.

“You know I will,” she cried eagerly, as she placed hers in his, glad of the relief from her thoughts.

“I am very, very glad to speak to you again, dear,” he said, in a subdued way. “You look so well, too, with that colour. There, I will not keep you. Perhaps some day we may meet again, and be able to have a friendly chat. Good-bye!”

He walked hurriedly away, and the tears rose to her eyes.

“Poor dear Chris!” she said. “I always seemed to love him as if he were my brother.”

“Who could help liking him, Miss Mary?”

“Sarah?”

“Yes, miss. You were speaking aloud. Ah! poor lad, we don’t often see him about now. Look, miss; Mr Trevithick.”

Mary had already seen the lawyer as he stepped out of the hotel and came towards

them slowly, till he appeared to see them suddenly, when he turned sharply upon his heel and went back to the hotel.

Mary crimsoned with mortification, and then felt as if she would sink beneath the weight of her misery. Nearly a fortnight had passed, and her lover had made no sign ; and now, when they were on the point of meeting, he had openly avoided her.

Mary's heart felt as if it sank down into the darkness. There could be but one interpretation, she said. He had repented of the engagement, and his eyes had been opened to what a poor, misshapen little thing she was.

"Sarah !" she whispered hoarsely, "I cannot see where I am going ; please take me home quickly, so that I am not—"

"No, no, my dear, let's walk up here first and over the bridge into the glen. You are too agitated to be seen. Try and be firm, my dear—try and be firm."

Totally unnerved, the poor girl clung to the sturdy woman by her side, and readily allowed her to guide her right away up into the calm, silent glen, where, making a sign, she let Sarah

Woodham assist her to one of the detached rocks, where she sat down to let her tears of misery have full vent.

“And I was so happy,” she moaned at last, as she looked up piteously in Sarah Woodham’s face. “Is there real happiness, Sarah, for poor creatures such as we? Life appears to be all misery and care.”

It was only about the third walk that Glyddyr had taken alone, and he left home reluctantly, and with a shadow as it were following every step.

“I oughtn’t to have gone and left her,” he muttered. “It’s of no use trying to deceive myself; all that quiet, calm way means something, and I’m sure they meet—I could swear it. She never dares to look me straight in the face. I won’t stay away long. I won’t stay here long either. I see him; he’s always hanging about trying to catch sight of her. Does he think I’m blind? I know! I know!”

He walked on hurriedly toward the quarry, but he had over-rated his strength, and grinding his teeth with rage, he sat down and began to wipe his wet brow.

This cursed weakness," he groaned. "But I'm stronger and better now. If I could have a drop of brandy now and then—not much—I should soon be all right."

"Yes," he said, after a pause, during which he had been looking nervously round, "I'll go away and take her on the Continent for our wedding trip. In another week I shall be strong and well enough, and we'll go away, and Chris Lisle may grind his teeth, and say the grapes are sour."

"I wonder whether they ever have met while I was so ill and at my worst? He knows the way. He was found in the grounds that night. Would she dare?"

"No, no," he muttered, after a long pause. "She wouldn't dare, but he might persuade her. Curse him! Why does he stay in the place?"

"There, there; this won't do. I'm getting hot and excited, and I can't bear it yet. I'll go on now and see what the scoundrels are doing with the stones. I know they rob me because I'm ill and don't understand the trade; but I'll startle some of them."

“Now, then, I’m better now. The old strength’s coming back, and— No,” he cried, with a whine of misery, “I can’t go on. If I go there it will seem as if he’s back and at my elbow always. It’s bad enough at home. He seems to haunt the cursed place, and I’m always fancying he’s there. That doctor does me no good; no good. I want strength, strength. There, I’ll go back.”

He was so weak that, short as the distance was, he was well-nigh spent, and had to sit down twice. But as he reached the end of the hollow road, overshadowed by trees, and came out in the open, where he could see the sea and feel the cool breeze, he recovered himself.

“Yes, there she lies,” he said, as he let his eyes rest upon his yacht. “What a time since I have been aboard! Yes, why not at once? We’ll go to-morrow and sail across to France, and coast down to the Pyrenees. Get away from here; curse the place. It will be long before I come back.”

He panted a little as he turned up the slope and passed through the gateway, to pause on the terrace, and look once more upon

the yacht, as she lay about a quarter of a mile from where he stood.

"I was a fool not to think of it before. Get her right away ; she daren't refuse. No, no ; not so bad as that. She wouldn't have dared. And yet it would have been so easy while I was lying by."

He entered the hall with curious thoughts buzzing through his brain.

"A miserable, puling, white-faced thing ! Where is she ? I'll tell her to get ready. We will go to-morrow."

He went into the drawing-room, but Claude was not there, and in an instant suspicion was master of his brain. Where was she ?

He crossed the room and looked out through the open window, but no Claude. Then, hurrying to the dining-room, he saw that she was not there.

As he came out, he caught sight of a skirt just passing through a swing-door, and he dashed after it.

It was one of the maids.

"Here," he said, in a half-whisper. "Your mistress—upstairs ?"

"No, sir. In the library, I think. A gentleman came."

"That'll do," he said sharply. "No; stop. Where is Miss Mary?"

"Gone out, sir, with Mrs Woodham."

He turned quickly and swung to the door, with a look in his face that was diabolical.

"Gun—pistol?" he muttered. "No, no; not that—not murder. Better revenge. Let of the money's mine. Free, free! Let him take her—let him—curse him! I wish I was strong once more."

As if impelled by the wave of passion that came over him, he walked quickly to the library door, and as he reached it, he heard a peculiar clang, as of the closing of the book-shelf doors which screened the iron safe.

A peculiar look of rage and cunning distorted his face; and, twisting the handle round, he threw open the door and rushed in, as, with her face wild from excitement, Claude turned towards him.

"Hah!" he cried, with a look of fierce triumph, as he caught her by the wrist, "I've

come back." And he uttered a low laugh as he pointed to the great safe.

Claude tried to speak, but no words would come, and she clung to the hand which held her to keep herself from falling.

"Didn't expect me back, eh? Didn't expect me back?"

"Come away quick; come away!" panted Claude, in a voice hardly above a whisper.

"Yes, of course," he snarled, as he held her at arm's-length, nearly fainting from terror and agony. "Come away, so as not to disturb our dear Chris!"

Claude looked at him wildly.

"Parry Glyddyr!" she cried, as a look of horror dilated her eyes, and she tried to cling to him and push him towards the door, for no further words words would come.

"Yes! Parry Glyddyr, your lawful husband," he yelled. "Found out at last!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAWYER IS BUSY.

JOHN TREVITHICK would, in an ordinary way, have finished the little business in connection with Mrs Sarson's savings in a very short time, but he quite fluttered the widow by the importance he attached to the deed, and the way in which he was going to invest the money.

"You will not have any savings left, Mrs Sarson, when he sends in his bill," Chris said to her grimly ; and, on Trevithick's next visit, the poor woman, in an agitated way, touched upon the topic of the bill of costs.

"Nonsense !" said Trevithick, smiling. "My dear Mrs Sarson, I always charge what the legal men call *pro rata*."

"Oh, do you, sir ?" she said. "Then that way is not very expensive ?"

"Certainly not. You don't understand. If you were very rich, the bill would be high ;

but in your case, if you trust to me, your costs shall be very small indeed."

"Thank you kindly, sir; and will you take the money to-day?"

"No; you have kept it safely so far, and a few days will not hurt. I'll take it next time."

When "next time" came, John Trevithick said the same, and at his next visit he once more put her off.

"What a shame!" he said to himself on his next visit to Danmouth. "It is imposing on the poor woman. I must find some other excuse for coming over. By George!"

He slapped his great knee, and laughed with delight at his happy thought.

"I'll open an office here in Danmouth; take Mrs Sarson's second parlour, and come over twice a week. Do her good and do me good, and, who knows, it may bring clients."

Full of this idea, he called upon Mrs Sarson one morning about a fortnight before the incidents of the last chapter, and on being closeted with her, opened out his business at once in a quick, legal way.

"Now, then, my dear madam, if you will

hand me that money, I'll take charge of it, complete the little mortgage, and you can have the deeds of the premises upon which your money is to be lent at five per cent., or I will keep them for you—which you please.”

“Oh, I should like, if you don't think it would be wrong, Mr Trevithick, to keep the deeds myself, as I shall not have the money.”

“Very good.”

Mrs Sarson, who had recovered from the rheumatic attack which had frightened her into making arrangements about her savings, rose from her chair, and, in a very feminine way, sought for the key, which was kept hidden in an under pocket—one of the make of a saddle bag—whose security depended on the strength of two tape strings.

The lawyer smiled to himself, and thought of his own iron safe, built in the wall of the office, as the widow brought out her key, and opened a large tea-caddy standing upon a side table.

“Not a very safe place, Mrs Sarson, eh?”

“Ah, you don't know, sir,” said the woman, with a smile, as she threw up the lid, took

up a large cut glass sugar basin full of white lumps from the centre compartment, and then first one and then the other of the two oblong receptacles, each well filled with fragrant black and green, for she opened them, and laughingly displayed their contents.

This done, she thrust her hand down into the round velvet-lined hole from which the sugar basin had been lifted, gave it a knock sideways, and then lifted out the whole of the internal fittings of the caddy, set it on the table, and held it on one side, showing that the bottom was the exact size of a Bank of England note, one for ten pounds being visible.

"There!" she said, with a sigh; "that was my dear husband's idea. He was a cabinetmaker, sir, and he was quite right. They have always been safe."

"Yes, Mrs Sarson," said the lawyer; "but you have lost your interest."

"Lost what, sir?"

"Your interest! How many years have they been lying here?"

"Oh, a many, sir. Some were put there by my poor husband, and I've gone on

putting in more as often as I could save up another ten pounds, for I kept the sovereigns in my pocket till I had ten, and then I used to change them for notes."

"Humph, yes!" said Trevithick, wetting a finger, bank-clerkly, and counting the notes. Twenty-seven. All tens. Two hundred and seventy pounds. I only want two hundred and fifty, Mrs Sarson. You shall put two back for nest eggs."

He took the two top notes off, before turning the parcel over and looking at the bottom note, one that looked old and yellow, and he read the date.

"Forty years old that one, Mrs Sarson."

"Yes, sir ; but that don't matter, does it?"

"Oh, no ; the Bank of England never refuses its paper. And this top one is dated—let me see. Ah ! two years old, and pretty new— Good God !"

The number had struck his eye, and he had turned it over, and read a name written upon the back.

"Oh, Mr Trevithick ! Don't, pray don't say it's a bad one !"

“Eh? Bad?” cried the lawyer absently.
“Where did you get this note?”

“From the hotel, sir,” cried the poor woman, in a broken voice. “They always change my gold for me there. But they shall give me a good one, for I can swear that I got it there.

“Wait a moment,” cried Trevithick excitedly. “No; those are quite right.”

“Oh, thank goodness for that!” cried Mrs Sarson, who was trembling so that the notes she took back rustled in her hand. “But do, do look again at the others and see if they are good.”

“Yes, yes, all good, Mrs Sarson,” said Trevithick, looking over them hurriedly.

“Then give me that one, sir, and I’ll take it back to them at once.”

“No, no, Mrs Sarson, the note is quite good,” said the lawyer, putting on his business mask, and looking quite calm, though his heart was thumping heavily.

“Oh, dear! and you gave me such a fright, sir. You are sure it is a good one?”

“So good, Mrs Sarson, that I’d give you ten

golden sovereigns for it. Five hundred if it were necessary," he said to himself; and after being witness to the replacing of two notes in the caddy, and giving a receipt for those confided to his charge, he made his way back to Toxeter in a state of excitement that was new to him, and did not rest till he was locked up in his own private room.

"It seems impossible," he thought, as he compared the note with the closely written figures he had in his pocket-book, and then examined the signature at the back.

"Yes; there's the clue I have sought for so long—dropped into my hands like this. Oh!"

He sat back with the perspiration gathering on his forehead, and the look of excitement on his face changing slowly into horror as bit by bit the meaning of the name on the back of that note gradually unfolded itself till he was gazing upon a picture of horror that appalled him.

"No, no, no! It's too shocking," he cried at last, as he wiped his brow. The man could not be such a wretch.

"But he is a wretch! A cold-blooded,

swearing, drinking brute ; and with all his flash and show, and yacht, I know that he was always hard up for money, and being hunted by that usurious scoundrel Gellow."

Trevithick wiped his brow again.

"Why, he must have had it all. Robbed the poor old man who had taken him to his hearth. Yes, I daresay to pay off that scoundrel and get time. Yes, there's his name to the note. He must have changed it at the hotel. I knew that money was missing. Robbed him—the man who welcomed him as a son, and encouraged him to win his daughter. The black-hearted traitor. I always hated him. A cowardly, despicable thief, stealing the money that some day would have been his."

Trevithick leaped from his seat, and in his excitement struck a penholder, and knocked over the ink.

"Good Heaven !" he exclaimed, "he murdered him !"

Trevithick stood with his hands pressed upon his brow, trying to think calmly, but his head became hotter as the idea grew strong.

“Yes,” he said, “died of an overdose of chloral, they said. He could never have taken that money without. He must have got to know, and—yes, he must have drugged him to death, so as to get the heavy sum. Christopher Lisle! Bah! This was the man!”

“No, no; I’m growing wild—I must be calm.”

He caught a glass, and poured out some water from a table-filter, drank it hastily, and began to walk up and down the room for a time, till, feeling more himself, he took a seat to try and think the matter out, raising up every point strongly in Glyddyr’s favour.

“No man could be such a wretch as to murder another, and then marry his child,” he said at last firmly; but the accusation came more strongly, and with supporting evidence, as something began to whisper to him, “But what was the meaning of all that drinking—of that conduct on the wedding-day—of the abject dread of Gartram’s picture, and of the delirious wanderings about being haunted?”

“He is the man!” cried Trevithick at last, as he brought his fist down heavily into his

left palm. "Gartram was murdered—accidentally, perhaps — but murdered, and — Great Heavens! what shall I—what ought I to do?"

He sat long turning the matter over and over, viewing it from every point, and at last coldly and clearly it all seemed to stand out before him.

"No," he said, "I cannot keep silence. He is a curse to that poor girl. Poor blind old Gartram favoured him, and the fiend played upon the poor girl's filial duty. Yes, I know that well enough. Poor Claude would almost give her life to be free from the wretch who is dissipating her property to clear off debts to Gellow. And is he an accomplice?"

"Accomplice in forcing on the marriage; but that wretch must have done the deed, and, Heaven helping me, I'll bring it home to him, and set the poor girl free.

"Stop. I'm going on too fast. It may be remorse and horror for the robbery. He could not have murdered Gartram. Poor fellow, he did indulge in chloral, and the doctor said it was an overdose. No, Gartram was too

clever and experienced in his treatment of himself for that. I can't help it; something seems to impel me. I must go.

“And Claude!

“I can't help it. I feel so sure. Better the shock and be free, than be slowly tortured to death by a man who is little better than a devil.

“Yes,” he cried finally, “I am sure, but I'll take other advice before I proceed very much further.”

The consequence was that poor Mrs Sarson was horrified at not receiving her mortgage deed to hide away, and shivered as she credited the lawyer with going off to London to spend her savings of a life, for she could only obtain from his office the news that he was out on business.

As shown, Mrs Sarson was not the only one who had misjudged Trevithick, for, in his abstraction and earnest following of the quest upon which he was now engaged, there were no more meetings with Mary; and his avoidance of her when they met was for very special reasons of his own.

"I can save her from the scene," he had said, "though I cannot save poor Claude."

He was wrong, for he found her hurrying back with Sarah Woodham, and when he hurriedly tried to stay her, she turned upon him angrily, and refused to hear.

And so it was that Claude was seated alone in the library that day, sick at heart, as she thought of her future, and asking herself what she could do to win her husband's love and bring herself to love him, when one of the maids announced that a gentleman wanted to see master.

"Yes, Mr Glyddyr," said a quiet, firm voice, and the man, who had followed the servant, stepped in, signed to the girl to go, closed the door after her, and then turned to face Claude, who had risen and was standing trembling, as if from a suspicion of some terrible trouble to come.

The visitor took in her agitation directly.

"Sort of body who will try to screen him," he said to himself.

"What is the meaning of this intrusion?" said Claude, trying to be calm.

“Business, ma’am. Sorry to trouble you. Where’s Mr Glyddyr?”

“Mr Glyddyr is out.”

The man smiled pityingly.

“You will excuse me, ma’am—Mrs Glyddyr?”

“Yes; I’m Mrs Glyddyr.”

“Servant did not say he was out. Too ill to go out. Where is he, please? You see I know.”

“I told you Mr Glyddyr was out. What do you want?”

“Business, ma’am — important business. Must see him at once.”

“You must call when he is at home.”

“Sorry to be rude to a lady, but your face, ma’am, says he is at home, and will not show up.”

“What do you want?”

The man looked sharply round, and his eyes rested on the ajar door of the safe, with its casing of books, its old purpose being now at an end.

“Way into another room,” he said to himself; “he’s there.—I want Mr Glyddyr,” he

continued firmly. "Now; look here, ma'am; I can feel for you, though I am a police officer, but I have my duty to do."

"Your duty?"

"Yes, ma'am, my duty; and Mr Glyddyr is in there; he may as well come out like a gentleman, and let it all be quietly done. He must know that the game is up, and that any attempt at getting away from me is worse than folly. Will you let me pass?"

"Stop!" cried Claude excitedly, as, like lightning, thought after thought flashed through her mind; for at that moment she heard a cough and a step that she recognised only too well. And this man—police—it must be to arrest.

"Tell me," she cried quickly, "what is it? Why have you come?"

"I'll tell Mr Glyddyr himself, ma'am, please. Stand aside. I don't want to be rude, but I've got my duty to do, and do it I will."

He passed Claude sharply, brushing against her arm, and seized the thick door to draw it open, while the thought flashed through her brain,—

“ I am his wife. I prayed for a way to win his love—to give him mine. This man will arrest him, and I must save him if I can.”

Without pausing to consider as to the folly of her impulse, she turned on the man as he threw open the door and bent forward, and, thrusting with all her might, she sent him staggering in.

The door closed upon him with a loud clang.

“ He is my husband,” panted Claude, mad with dread and excitement. “ O Heaven help me ! what has he done ? ”

At that moment, wild with jealous rage and doubt, Glyddyr came into the room, and ended, as she clung to him, speechless with emotion, by striking her savagely with such force as he possessed.

Claude uttered a low moan, and fell insensible across the entrance to the safe ; while, after wrenching out the key, Glyddyr hurried panting from the library, closed and locked the door, and stood thinking.

“ Yes,” he said, with a malignant look ; “ I’ll do that. Witnesses—witnesses ! They shall all know.”

He crossed the hall to the drawing-room, and dragged at the bell so violently that, as he returned, the servants came hurrying through the swing door.

"Here, quick, I want you," he said hoarsely. "Ah, just in time," he cried, as at that moment the entrance door was darkened, and Mary Dillon entered, with Trevithick trying to detain her, and closely followed by Sarah Woodham. "Better and better," he said, with a grin. "This way—this way, witnesses, please."

He unlocked and threw open the library door, and drew back for the others to go past.

"John Trevithick, quick! there is something wrong," cried Mary, as she ran in—to shriek wildly and loudly, "Help! he has murdered her!"

"You villain!" roared Trevithick, seizing Glyddyr, but he wrested himself free.

"Bah! great idiot!" he cried. "There, look, she is only fainting—with joy, can't you see?" he continued, as Claude uttered a sigh, and moved one hand. "Now then, witnesses," he cried, with a savage laugh, "I have been out; I have just returned. This is my dear

wife, who wishes for a divorce ; and this," he almost yelled, as he threw open the great book-covered door of the safe, "is our dear friend Mr—"

He ceased speaking, with the malignant grin frozen upon his face, as the quick, stern-looking man staggered panting, half-suffocated from the safe, stared wildly for a few moments, and then, before Glyddyr could realise his position, recovered himself sufficiently to clap his hand upon the scoundrel's shoulder.

"Mr Parry Glyddyr," he cried "you are my prisoner. I arrest you for murder !"

CHAPTER XIX.

TWO WIVES.

CHRIS LISLE caught Trevithick, too, by the shoulder as he was leaving Danmouth that day, and, half wild with excitement, implored him to say whether the rumour was true.

“True enough, Mr Lisle. Mr Glyddyr is arrested, and his friend, who is believed to be an accomplice, was taken yesterday in London.”

Chris fell back, staring like one who has received some mental shock, and then walked slowly along the main street of the place to get to the bridge and go up the glen, so as to try and think quietly of all that it might mean to him.

As he went along he became dimly conscious of the fact that first one and then another touched his cap, or gave him a friendly nod ; but he was too much dazed to pay any heed, and he could only come to one conclusion : that there must be as great a mistake here as there was over the rumour about himself.

"It is too horrible to be true," he said, with a shudder.

At the Fort, Claude lay prostrate, unable to realise the truth of what had taken place, and shuddering from time to time as the terrible scene kept coming back.

"I would have spared her if I could," Trevithick had whispered to Mary before leaving; "but it was better that she should suffer sharply for a time than all her life."

Mary could not speak—she dared not trust herself for fear of saying words of which she would afterwards repent, for there was a great joy in her heart now that she knew the reason for Trevithick's silence, and she could not even go to Sarah Woodham's side, lest she should open her heart there.

Then came days of wild excitement in the place, with event after event occurring to keep the gossip at white heat. There were the examinations of Glyddyr, at which he preserved a stubborn silence. And a fresh excitement in the presence, at the second examination, of a handsome, sharp-looking woman fashionably

dressed, who took up her abode after the examination at the hotel.

She had seated herself in the court by the help of a friendly—made friendly—policeman, where she could face Glyddyr; and when, at last, their eyes met, he started and changed colour, but composed himself directly, for another trouble was but a trifle compared to that overhanging his life.

It was no friendly look that he had encountered, neither was the keen glance directed at Gellow, who, upon the second morning, was placed beside Glyddyr in the dock. For Denise showed her teeth slightly in the malicious smile, watching and listening intently to the end.

“I did not know that I should find him through the newspapers,” she said to herself. “I was fooled by that man into believing that he was gone abroad, when I might have come down and seen this madam whom he has married. But it is well.”

Then came fresh fuel to keep the excitement at white heat. A gentleman was down from London, and it was known that orders had

been given from high quarters that Gartram's remains were to be taken from the vault. That there was to be a *post mortem* examination, and a great chemist in London was to assist in bringing the crime home to the prisoner under remand.

This was true enough, and Doctor Asher and his colleague were called upon to assist. Two other doctors were also going to be present, on behalf of the prisoner and the Government.

When Asher received his instructions he shuddered, and the paper dropped from his hand.

"It is too horrible!" he muttered. "I will not be dragged into it again." But he had hardly uttered the words when his colleague arrived to talk the matter over with him.

"It is as horrible as it is absurd," Asher said.

"Yes, but we have received our instructions, and cannot refuse."

"But we performed our examination for the inquest," protested Asher. "It is so unnecessary. The man is innocent. We know well enough the cause of death."

The other shrugged his shoulders, and

finally went away ; while the next night it was being whispered, with bated breath, that the examination had been made, and there was talk of sealed bottles and the analytical chemist in London.

A week later, while the prisoners were lying under remand at the county gaol, Mrs Sarson tapped softly at Chris Lisle's door, and entered.

He did not move, for he was thinking deeply of how he would give the world if he dared go to the Fort as a friend and say a few words to Claude.

"And I can make no sign ; I dare make no sign," he was muttering, as his landlady's hand was laid upon his arm.

"I thought you'd like to hear the news, sir," she said respectfully.

"Yes. What news ?"

"I have just heard, sir, that Mrs Glyddyr is going over to Toxeter this morning to see Mr Glyddyr. Mr Trevithick has come to fetch her."

A spasm ran through Chris, and he turned away his head.

"Yes," he said ; "suppose it is her duty."

"And Doctor Asher is very bad indeed, sir,

this morning, and two other doctors are there. He is worse than when I spoke to you last night."

"Did you speak to me about him last night?"

"Why, surely, sir, you don't forget? But I have heard this morning what is the matter."

"Yes?" said Chris vacantly.

"It is very horrible, sir; but the new doctor told one of his patients that Doctor Asher's knife slipped during the terrible examination of Mr Gartram the other day, and the cut has gone bad with some name he called it."

"Blood poisoning!" exclaimed Chris, startled by the news; "how shocking."

"Shocking indeed, sir. I didn't think poor little Danmouth could have had such trouble as all this; but the Lord be thanked that the whole truth has come out at last, and you can hold up your head once more. Poor fellow!" she muttered softly, "he don't seem to hear a word I said."

But Chris had heard; and, as soon as he was alone, he slipped a small glass in his pocket, and tramped out to the back of the place, and up the highest piece of cliff, where he could lie upon his breast and watch the Fort.

He did not wait long, for the carriage soon drew up to the front entrance, and directly after Trevithick appeared, leading out Claude, in deep mourning and thickly veiled. Then Mary came out, to step into the carriage ; and it was driven away, while Sarah Woodham, thin and sallow-looking, stood on the steps watching till it had disappeared, and at last Chris saw her as she turned, holding her hands to her temples, as if they throbbed.

“Will she come back to-night?” said Chris to himself. “I’ll wait and see.”

A couple of hours later, Trevithick led Claude slowly up towards the prison gates, for his companion had to cling to his arm for support, and he could feel the struggle that was going on as she strove to perform this duty to her husband.

They were within about fifty yards of the place, when Claude reeled and would have fallen but for the lawyer’s strong arm.

“Take my advice,” he whispered gently. “You can do no good, and you are not strong enough to go through such an interview as this.”

"I am better now," she said feebly. "A little faint, that is all."

"Put it off till another day."

"No," she said more faintly. "It is a duty to him. I will not believe that it can be true."

Trevithick was silent.

"Let us go on now," she said; and they had nearly reached the prison gates when there was a quick step, and a tall, fashionably-dressed woman stepped before them.

"Where are you going?" she said sharply in a strangely accented way.

"To see Mr Glyddyr, madam," said Claude, meekly. "I am his wife."

"You! Bah! You are nothing, girl," cried the woman, her dark eyes blazing with vindictive spite. "He is mine. He married me five years ago from his yacht, in Marseilles. Yes, I, Denise Leschalles. Yes. And you, my faith, what could I not do to you?"

Claude uttered a faint cry and threw up her veil, to gaze wildly at the woman.

"My faith, you look. Yes, I am his wife, I tell you again. You are nothing."

"Woman, is this true?" said Trevithick sternly.

"Bah! I say it not again. Go ask him, but he will only lie. Aha! and he could leave me to marry that! She is poor and weak. Take her away. I have the power to go and see my husband. This woman shall not pass."

"Tell me where you are staying," whispered Trevithick quickly. "Ah, I remember now. I saw you at Danmouth, at the hotel."

The woman made no reply, but went on up to the gate, while Claude clung to the strong arm which supported her.

"Mr Trevithick, can this be true?" she whispered.

"Heaven only knows," he said; "but you cannot go there now."

Chris Lisle's watch proved to be far shorter than he could have hoped, his patience being rewarded by the sight of the young mistress of the Fort as she was supported back into her home.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRUTH.

THE next day was a more eventful one still in the annals of Danmouth, and people stood in knots about the place discussing the new horror.

Doctor Asher was dying, and his colleague had sent for the nearest magistrate that morning, to take down the dying man's deposition in the presence of witnesses, Trevithick being of those summoned to the bed.

The deposition was brief, but convincing, telling how the dying man had, when attending Gartram, found in his pocket-book sundry directions to his executors, explaining how his wealth was bestowed. The temptation had been too great for him, and after waiting long for an opportunity, he had taken advantage one evening of being at the

house to add a certain drug to the chloral Gartram was in the habit of taking from time to time.

“As a dying man about to appear before my Maker,” he said, “I swear I had no intention of taking his life. I wished to make his sleep so sure that I could easily take what notes I wished, and this I did, to the amount of forty thousand pounds, but I did not calculate that the drug would be so strong, and I was horrified when I found that I could not bring him back from his deadly sleep.”

“What was the drug?” asked the magistrate, in the midst of a terrible silence.

“Better that it should not be known,” said the dying man feebly. “I have told the truth. The money is in the iron safe in my study. All but a few hundred pounds or so I sent abroad, and a note or two I passed beside. I gave Glyddyr that one by mistake, and—”

The words that would have followed were never uttered, for insensibility supervened, and Doctor Asher never spoke again.

The law moves slowly, but it is pretty sure, and in due course the two men accused of complicity in Gartram's death were discharged without a stain upon their character, so it was said, but Glyddyr was re-arrested upon another charge.

A guilty conscience had kept him silent about the accusation of murder, for he had added to the draught Gartram was in the habit of taking, but other hands had thrown this away. Still, he had always suffered mentally from the idea that he had murdered the man who had chosen him as a son.

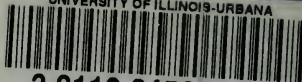
Against the charge of bigamy he fought savagely, for there was the impending punishment to dread, and the loss of an almost princely fortune; but Denise made good her claim. The pleas of her being an alien fell to the ground, and the law cut asunder the tie that held Claude Gartram to one who passed for ever from her sight. Glyddyr's term of imprisonment was but short, for his health had been so shattered that he was shortly after set at liberty, to die in Denise's arms.

Of the rest of the actors who played their parts in this life drama, no more need be said than is contained in the French proverb:
Cela va sans dire.

THE END.



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